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THE KING-CRANE COMMISSION: ARAB NATIONALISM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

By

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Introduction

The King-Crane Commission, officially the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey, was formed to survey the populations of Turkey, Syria, and Mesopotamia (Iraq) and make recommendations on their political future to the Paris Peace Conference.[1] This was deemed necessary by the United States delegation to the conference to satisfy the twenty-second article of the Treaty of Versailles, which called for a mandate system for the "rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone," but also stipulated that "the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."[2] The petitions written on behalf of religious sects in the Levant, with a focus on those from French occupied territory of Lebanon, will form the basis for my analysis.

The commission is largely viewed as a failure of liberal diplomacy along with other interwar phenomena such as the League of Nations and Paris Peace Pact. The commission's final report and its recommendations never reached the conference, resulting in the mandate system divided between Great Britain and France. However, the commission and the contemporary discourse surrounding it can provide a multi-perspective window, though filtered, through which the intersecting discourses of Western liberalism, imperialism, Arab sectarianism, and nationalism can be studied.

This project includes several main lines of inquiry: the organization, goals, and obstacles of the commission along with its interactions with the Arab nationalist movement, the influence

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[1] Instructions for Commissioners, 25 March 1919, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 1, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/236/rec/6.

[2] Charles I. Bevans, *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, Washington: Department of State, 1968, www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf (accessed November 2, 2018), 55-56.

of religious groups attempting to portray an idealized nonsectarian environment in their petitions, and the commission and President Wilson as representatives of one of several competing ideologies in both U.S. foreign policy and that of the other European powers. Chapter 1 introduces the commission, its organization, and some of the difficulties they faced in collecting petitions from the diverse population in the Arab provinces. While not entirely scientific in their methodology, the commissioners collected petitions from a broadly diverse section of Arab society and sorted the responses into several general "programs," or favored plans for independence and mandate. The chapter explores the kinds of political and social groups that petitioned the commission and the programs they favored. Additionally, Chapter 1 includes a review of Arab nationalist history from the movement's foundations in the nineteenth century to the push for independence after World I. Specifically, I show how the growth of uncensored journalism in the region allowed for the spread of the pro-independence, nationalist rhetorical campaign in the lead-up to the commission.

Chapter 2 uses Fanar Haddad's theory on top-down sectarianism (and desectarianism) as a foundation to analyze Emir Faisal's approach to religious diversity in his new nation-state compared to the petitions from religious groups to the commission. I find that contrary to Haddad's model, Faisal and his government chose to ignore religious difference and diversity altogether in his nationalist rhetoric. On the other hand, religious leaders throughout the Arab provinces chose carefully nonsectarian language to petition the commissioners for their independence in an attempt to appeal to American, and more broadly Western, ideals of democracy and separation of church and state. Regardless of accuracy, they seemed to have hoped that the commissioners genuinely had the power to support Arab independence at the

peace conference and would do so if they saw traditionally "American" ideals being upheld in the petitions.

From the perspective of American foreign policy, Chapter 3 analyzes the commission archives from the disparate perspectives found in interwar America and Europe to reveal how and why multiple parties gave approval and support for the commission despite the threat it clearly posed to European imperial interests. Using President Wilson's position on self-determination as a familiar foundation, I explore the influence of American Protestant missionaries on launching the commission and the complex factors that influenced responses from Britain and France. I find that while many of the missionaries involved in the peace negotiations supported the idea of self-determination in theory, their ideology, rooted in Orientalist assumptions of race and religion, led them to believe an American mandate in the region would be a natural choice, making the commission unnecessary. However, one missionary, Dr. Howard Bliss of the Syrian Protestant College eagerly supported the idea of a commission on what he claimed as the grounds of honor, and he was able to convince President Wilson, a friend, of the idea's merit. Pressure from the President, with America's monetary influence over the European allies, made both British and French authorities unwilling to fully reject the American recommendation of a commission. On the other hand, both countries felt the growing threat to their imperial interests from this and the parallel liberal, anti-war movement growing in Europe. In the end, Britain decided a commission consulting Arab opinion in mandates and nationalism would serve the dual purpose of appeasing American and British support for pro-democracy liberalism as well as satisfying some of the demands of Arab nationalists. In contrast, France feared that a commission would do more harm than good in securing their claim to Syria and Lebanon, which rested primarily on theoretical support from the

Christian population of Mt. Lebanon. Regardless, neither country chose to participate in the commission, instead remaining neutral in its execution.

Throughout this thesis, I rely on the King-Crane Digital Collection, curated by Oberlin College Archives as my primary source of evidence. The archives contain source material that can be roughly divided into three sections: the documents, notes, and correspondence among members of the commission and with other officials associated with the Paris Peace Conference before and during the commission, handwritten and printed Arabic-language petitions, newspaper articles, and speeches from Arab religious and political leaders to addressed to local populations or the commission, and the public and private correspondences between King and Crane and with the Editor and Publisher in the years following the commission. Given the scope of this project and its focus on Arab nationalism, I naturally restrict the majority of the documents concerning the commission itself to those related to Greater Syria, with exceptions given for documents particularly relevant to the discourse among the United States and other Western powers.

The first grouping of Arabic-language documents includes the petitions and speeches directed to commission members by various delegations and representative bodies of local religious sects and political groups along with local newspaper articles meant to direct nationalist arguments and support for the commission to readers. The petitions offer a view of these groups' nationalist goals following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and their desires for independence to be recognized at the Paris Peace Conference in their own words. These documents, while on the surface reflecting a unified plan for new government, present a distinct difficulty in determining how much of their nationalist, and especially nonsectarian, language is an accurate representation of sentiments in the region, as these groups were perfectly aware that their responses to the

commissioners could influence their chances for independence. However, many of the petitions from religious minorities mention, at least briefly, concerns about their future under Muslim rule, revealing some of the complexities in the relationship between religious difference and growing Arab nationalism. The newspaper articles also provide a view of the way nationalism and Western intervention were presented to civilians by local leaders, adding to the information available about the nationalizing process.

The second grouping of documents, forming the preliminary correspondence and preparations made for the commission by both the commission members and the delegates and officials at the Paris Peace Conference, provide insight into the motives and goals of the commission from various Western parties. One journal article from The New Europe by Robert de Caix defends the French position on mandates, while other contemporary letters and memoranda included in the papers discuss the British position. These, along with other documents such as instructions given to the commissioners (agreed to by President Wilson, British Prime Minister Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Clemenceau, and Italian Prime Minister Orlando) help identify the various, and often conflicting, agendas within individual delegations to the conference and among them. Additionally, the extensive textual and photographic notes and correspondence among commission members during their investigative trip illuminate the motivations and concerns of the commissioners themselves and especially highlight the broader themes of American involvement in the region in the interwar period.

In addition to the above documents, the digital archive includes the correspondence between King and Crane in the years after the conclusion of the commission and the Paris Peace Conference as well as their discussions with various editors and officials at the Editor and Publisher, who eventually published their report in 1922. These documents further detail the

evangelical theme of their mission as well as the underlying liberalism of their ideology. The correspondence reflects their belief in the importance of their findings as well as Crane's observations about Syria and attitudes towards the United States upon his return in 1921. These documents help clarify the commission's methodology and judgments regarding their successes and failures, as well as illustrating the continued interest in Syria after the establishment of the French mandate.

Secondary literature is particularly lacking for the King-Crane Commission. Harry N. Howard, a personal friend of the commissioners, published The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East in 1963 on the commission and peace conference based on letters and other documents supplied by Charles Crane and Albert Lybyer in the 1930s. As such, I treat the work like a primary source given his close relationship with the commissioners and his attempt to provide an intimate account of their work and the peace negotiations in Paris. More recently, historian Andrew Patrick wrote America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919 in 2014. This work focuses almost exclusively on the commissioners as individuals and their own motivations and biases in surveying the Arab population. While illuminating, Patrick relies entirely on the translations of Arabic documents provided by the commission's translator, Dr. Sami Haddad. This thesis, therefore, makes a concerted effort to provide original translations, with brief explanations of discrepancies with Haddad's work when applicable. Still, Patrick's important work in outlining the arguments and influences of the commissioners is instrumental in taking a broader approach in studying the interaction between the commission and Arab petitioners and the national actors involved from the outset of the commission.

This work is, of course, not comprehensive. As can be seen from the absence of significant literature directly related to the commission, more work needs to be done on the interaction between Arab nationalism and the Western liberal movement, along with their collision with European imperialism. The commission, in general, is often viewed as an aberration in history, and certainly a failure. Instead, this project hopes to show the commission as the result of a complex and contradicting national interests, providing in an opportunity for Arab nationalists to voice their arguments for independence and international legitimacy on the world stage. This opportunity came at a time of extreme uncertainty for both the post-Ottoman Arab provinces and the European powers.

The Commission and Arab Nationalism

The King-Crane Commission, made up of Henry King, Charles Crane, and their technical advisors, left for Palestine from Paris on May 29, 1919.[3] From there, they began a five-week tour of the Levant, during which they met with local political leaders and held interviews with delegations presenting their demands in written and oral petitions. These petitions formed the basis for the commission's final report on the political desires of the native population following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter will provide an overview of the commission and their methodology as well as the Arab nationalist movement leading up to the Syrian independence movement led by Emir Faisal. The petitions gathered by the commission offer a window through which the motivations and factions among Arab nationalists in the interwar period may be observed. Additionally, they offer clear examples of the rhetoric and propaganda utilized to gain supporters both among the Syrian population and on the international level.

The commission intersected with Arab nationalism during a relatively brief period of uncertainty between the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the French mandate. In October 1919, local elites in Damascus surrendered to Allied forces while declaring an independent Syrian state. However, the British military gave control of the city, and most of present-day Syria, to Emir Faisal as part of war-time negotiations with his father and leader of the Arab Revolt, Sharif Husain.[4] The Paris Peace Conference, from which the mission was formed, began in January 1919 to form the Treaty of Versailles and redraw post-war boundaries in Europe and colonized lands.[5] For Arabs, already on a nationalist path that began in the nineteenth century,

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[3] Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1963), 82.

[4] Philip Shukry Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 78-79

[5] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

the conference and commission was a chance to transition the nationalist ideology to statehood and recognition from the West. In July 1919, Emir Faisal attempted to alleviate dissatisfaction with his government among Arabs by organizing the Syrian Congress, a hastily elected body that formed its own set of demands that were presented to the King-Crane Commission.[6] However, only a year later, Faisal lost even more support after agreeing to a French mandate in Lebanon and influence in an Arab-ruled Syria. With no legitimacy among the local population, Damascus fell to French control in July 1920, less than two years after Faisal's government had been declared.[7] The government under Emir Faisal, along with independent individuals and groups, created an environment of optimism and vocal nationalism that was ultimately short-lived, but it intersected and communicated with the shifting world order among Western states through the King-Crane Commission.

Petitioning the King-Crane Commission

The commissioners arrived in the Lebanese city of Tripoli on July 12, 1919, after about a month of touring the region. While witnessing French military actions that King described as "the most barefaced suppression of opinion anywhere seen," the commissioners heard locals' petitions regarding their political future.[8] Crane did not attend this city's interviews due to an illness, but the rest of the group was greeted by French and British military officers and taken to the government house. In one day, the commissioners held interviews with and received the petitions of fifteen different delegations while soldiers stood with bayonets outside. The delegations were roughly categorized by religion: Muslims, Greek Orthodox Christians, and

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6 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 118-119.
7 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 89-92.
8 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission*

Maronites. One petition simply claimed to represent the Muslims and Christians of Hisn al-Akrad, an area outside Tripoli. In it, these religious leaders argued for an independent and unified Syria in line with the demands of the Syrian Congress, later collectively known to the commission as the Damascus Program. In general, the commission found that most of the Muslims they heard in Tripoli supported this independence program, while Orthodox and Maronite Christians followed different and varied ideologies. At the end of the day, the commissioners returned to the private yacht they had arrived on, borrowed from General Allenby of the British military, and sailed to their next stop at Alexandretta.[9]

The commissioners' experience in Tripoli was just one of many during their forty-one-day mission. Beginning in Jaffa on June 11, the commissioners collected data on the desires of the local population by conducting in-person interviews with delegates from "the different religious, racial, and economic groups" of each city they visited.[10] Captain William Yale, the commission's technical advisor for the southern regions of Turkey, was in charge of organizing the interviews with these groups and planning the itineraries for each stop, but he also took the requests and recommendations of British, French, and Arab leadership into account when choosing the groups and their order of appearance for each city.[11] In total, the commission received written and oral petitions from local delegations in thirty-six cities throughout the British-, French-, and Arab-controlled regions of the OETA (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration). Another 1,520 villages were represented by delegates that travelled to the bigger cities visited by the commissioners. By the end of their trip, the commissioners had

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[9] Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1646/rec/184; Howard, 135-136.

[10] Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 89.

[11] Ibid., 90.

received a total of 1,863 petitions, oral or written, from the various delegations sent to make their demands, with a total of 91,079 signatures and an average of 49 signatures per petition.[12]

The petitions were written and signed by a variety of groups representing different sectors of Arab society. The commission's final report divided them into political, economic, and religious categories. Political groups mainly consisted of administrative and municipal councils and other local leaders, while economic groups represented those of specific trades, farmers, and "young men's clubs." A majority of the groups, however, represented religious communities within the cities the commission visited. Muslims and Christians of various sects were heard, as well as other minority groups, such as Jews, Druze, Samaritans, and Persians. Interestingly, the Nusayri are also included among the non-Muslim groups. Some of the Muslim groups represented the ulama and other religious leaders in the community, and the commission received oral or written petitions from both Christian and Muslim women's groups.[13] 248 petitions claimed to represent religious groups, compared to 41 economic and 153 political groups. The implications of this slant and their ability to appeal to the commission's sense of democratic and religiously tolerant ideals are explored further in Chapter 2.

An issue of al-Raya newspaper, published while the commission was in Aleppo on July 18, 1919, lays out the itinerary for their visit to the city, providing an example of the priorities given to the different groups, especially to religious communities. According to the paper, the commissioners met first with the administrative council (majlis al-*idāra*) and then the qadis, muftis, and ulama. Christian groups followed the political and religious leadership, along with Jews and groups of Muslim and Christian women. On the second day of their stay in Aleppo, the

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[12] Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*, 2 December 1922, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 10A, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1239/rec/15, 4.

[13] Ibid., 5.

commissioners spoke with more political leaders and economic groups, including "store representatives" (mumathil maḥallat) and farmers.[14] The inclusion of such a diversity of social divisions in the commission, especially women's petitions (given the lack of a political voice women were still experiencing in America) reflects the breadth of nationalist sentiment felt across Arab society.[15]

It is important to emphasize that the goal of the commissioners was not to empirically prove the definite preferences of the religiously, ethnically, and economically diverse region with an airtight scientific method. Achieving such a conclusion would be nearly impossible with the technology available to them in the early twentieth century. Further, much of the survey was carried out in British- and French-controlled territory, countries which had refused to contribute their own commissioners or resources to the project. Therefore, they were interested in beginning a conversation and a transfer of ideas to better understand how the region could be integrated into a new world order. To do this, they relied heavily on petitions from local elites representing large groups of people and Westerners living in the region, such as American missionaries and European military personnel and businessmen. The difficulties in forming a truly accurate picture of such a diverse region are clear in the commission's final report, which acknowledges several concerns with their methodology and its accuracy in representing the diversity of opinion.[16]

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[14] Al-Raya Newspaper, Demands of the Citizens of Aleppo, 1919, 82062-15.51, box 1, folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1600/rec/1.

[15] The demands made by women to the commission were similar to those of the other groups. For an example of a petition submitted by a women's group, see Petition from Muslim women of Beirut, 8 July 1919, RS 15/13/22, Box 16, Folder 3, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1863/rec/8.

[16] Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*.

First, the petitions were not spread evenly in number across the cities they visited; the number of petitions they received per city increased as their expedition progressed, likely due to the greater amount of time those groups had to prepare their positions. The result is a somewhat skewed representation of the people's wishes throughout the region, leaning in favor of the French-occupied cities. Likewise, at least within individual cities, the representation of Christians was often higher than that of Muslims because of the larger number of Christian sects requesting interviews. The commissioners were also aware of the pervasive influence of propaganda on many of the petitions they received, with reports of "propaganda agent[s]" at work in cities prior to their arrival.[17] The use of propaganda by Faisal's state and the wider Arab nationalist movement will be explored further later in this chapter. Considering these issues, the commission tried to ensure the legitimacy of petitions and set a reputation for receiving petitions in strict confidence regardless of local military occupation, and they were ultimately confident in their ability to gain a broad sense of local feeling.[18] Even so, the military presence seen by the commissioners in Tripoli and other areas certainly would have intimidated petitioners, and many complained of French interference in their interviews and petitions.

One inherent problem with the commissioners' methodology that they did not consider is the possibility for information bias that arose from the language barrier. Because most of the petitions the commissioners received were written in Arabic, all information from the delegations had to pass through one man, their translator, before being heard by the commission. This translator, Dr. Sami Haddad, was a Protestant born in Jaffa and a graduate of the Syrian Protestant College Graduate School of Medicine, able to translate both Arabic and French into

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[17] Ibid., 4.
[18] Ibid., 5.

English.[19] It is entirely possible that Haddad would have used his local knowledge to simplify the complexities of Arab religious and economic groups and relationships when relaying information to the commissioners in English. However, this would require certain assumptions about the Americans' experiences with and knowledge of social categories and their priorities.

One example of such editing can be found in his translation of the petition described at the beginning of this section from Muslims and Christians in Hisn al-Akrad. The petition claims to represent "Muslims and Christians, notables, property owners and agriculturalists" (*muslimīn wa masīḥīn, wajuḥ wa aʿyān, wa aṣḥāb amlāk wa muzāriʿīn*), but in his translation at the bottom of the document, Haddad shortens this to "the Mohommadans and Christians.[20]" While the petitioners certainly employ nonsectarian rhetoric in their demands to appeal to perceptions of American ideals (a phenomenon studied in this and other petitions in Chapter 2), Haddad amplifies the effect through his translation. The original Arabic text seems to reference religious identity along with economic indicators to show that the petition represents a broad section of Tripoli society, but the commissioners would have read the petition as an appeal for independence and religious tolerance specifically from the city's religious elite. The simplification of complex identities was likely made to assist the American commissioners and fell in line with their divisions of other delegations into religious groups, but it altered the meaning of the information passed between the two parties.

From the petitions, the commissioners summed up the preferences of locals with six "political programs." The "independence program" called for independence and unity for Syria and opposed any Jewish immigration or state. The "Damascus program" was simply an

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[19] Biographies of Commission members, and internal structure, prepared by Albert H. Lybyer, 1919, Record series 15/13/22, Box 16, Folder 1, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/2238/rec/38.

[20] Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919.

expansion of the independence program with an added request for financial and technical assistance from an American mandate and other demands, such as a rejection of French claims and a democratic government under Emir Faisal.[21] This is the set of requests agreed upon by the Syrian Congress, whose petition forms a basis for my analysis in chapter 2. The "French Independent Greater Lebanon" program calls for an independent Lebanon separate from the rest of Syria under a French mandate. The "Independent Lebanon" program again wishes for separation from Syria but does not request any form of French assistance or rule, while the "Autonomous Lebanon" program wishes to remain a part of a united Syria with no mandate and an increased level of autonomy within the state.[22] While many of the petitions did not fit neatly into any one category, the programs nevertheless helped the commissioners sort them into broadly-defined and simplified preferences that could be more easily understood by the international community.

The use of petitions by individuals and groups to make demands of a state actor in times of conflict was not new during the King-Crane Commission in 1919. Indeed, a study of petitioning in early modern central Europe by Andreas Würgler suggests that they were used in some form as early as the fourteenth century.[23] Specific to the Ottoman Empire, historian Yiğit Akın writes of their use by peasant women to complain about the harsh demands made of them by the government during World War I, and they were used later in early republican Turkey to resolve local political disputes.[24]

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[21] Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*, 2 December 1922, 5.

[22] Ibid., 5-6.

[23] Andreas Würgler, "Voices from among the "silent masses": Humble petitions and social conflicts in early modern central Europe," *International Review of Social History* 46, no. 9 (2001), 14.

[24] Yiğit Akin, "War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire During the First World War," *Journal of Women's History* 26, no. 3 (2014), 12; Yiğit Akin, "Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in Early Republican Turkey: Politics of Petitioning," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 3 (2007), 106.

Würgler connects the use of petitions to revolts and protest movements, suggesting that petitions reveal the specific grievances and causes by particular participants. By giving a voice to the general masses, he writes, petitions and protests helped in the "politicizing of the public sphere" while showing how conflict can develop within a community originally unified in revolt.[25] This is clear in the Syrian independence movement observed by the commissioners. The petitions that were submitted reflect a range of individuals and religious and economic groups that previously would not have had a voice with the "state actor," or in this case, the international world order. Further, the different programs summarized by the commission reveal how Arab nationalism and broader support for Syrian independence took a variety of forms and experienced its own internal conflict in articulating their positions. According to Morack, studying the use of petitions "help[s] us to understand how people made sense of law and administrative practice."[26] The language of the petitions to the commission, as will be discussed later in the chapter, was carefully crafted in an effort to gain American support for Syrian independence at the Paris Peace Conference. Therefore, studying them reveals not just their preferences and social divisions but how they perceived both American ideals of democracy and religious tolerance and the power structure of the emerging world order following the war.

The Rise of Arab Nationalism

In their survey and observations of the post-Ottoman Arab provinces, the commissioners caught a snapshot of a nationalist movement that had been building since the previous century, now hoping to gain a voice on the world stage. The commissioners were correct in their view

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[25] Würgler, "Voices from among the 'silent masses'," 21-22.

[26] Ellinor Morack, "Refugees, Locals and 'The' State: Property Compensation in the Province of Izmir Following the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange of 1923" in *Law and Legality in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey*, ed. Kent F. Schull, M. Safa Saracolu, and Robert F. Zens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 184.

that many of the delegations they interviewed had been influenced by rhetorical campaigns, as much of the language in the petitions drew from past nationalist discourse and the growing circulation of pro-nationalist newspapers. The Young Turk Revolution had sparked a rapid blossoming of newspapers and magazines, with twenty-three new publications introduced in the following four years. Keith Watenpaugh describes newspapers at the time with the phrase "journalist-as-crusader," with writers who saw their role to be not just conveyors of the news but of social commentary and civics.[27]

The newspapers published in Arab cities like Aleppo this socially-minded tradition by quickly adopting a nationalist opposition to Turkey following the Arab Revolt. The rhetoric they employed essentially instructed their readership, who may have had radically different experiences in reality, to support Faisal's state and Arab nationalism in general.[28] The issue of al-Raya newspaper discussed earlier in this chapter is a clear example. The first section in the paper is an expression of praise and gratitude for President Wilson, who, according to the author, is "a great champion who supports the rights of the nations and defends them" (na*ṣīr ʿaẓīm ḍ*amin min nafsih ta*ʿīd ḥ*aquq al-*shaʿub wa al-dhud ʿan ḥīyāḍ*ihim).[29] The author appears to assume universal support for the Arab nationalist cause among the newspaper's readership with this praise of Wilson. His tone and descriptions of independence movement suggests that is entirely natural and eternal, with colonialists being the only obstacle in its implementation.

The passionate, even violent, language used to describe Arab nationalism in the paper is surely meant to convince and unify readers in the movement. For example, he says, describing the efforts of nationalists: "we have already formed the parties (al-a*ḥzāb)*, and we held the

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[27] Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 70, 72.
[28] Ibid., 134-136.
[29] Al-Raya Newspaper, Demands of the Citizens of Aleppo, 1919

assemblies before the war and after it, and we have deserted the Turk and their allies, and we tore the ranks of their army with this defeat, and we hastened to the field of Arab revolution in groups and alone (*zarāfātin wa waḥdānan*)."[30] This phrasing by the author serves a couple of purposes. First, he asserts the political legitimacy of an independent Syrian state by referencing the political parties and assemblies formed in preparation for a new state as the Ottoman Empire fell. Then, he uses a common enemy, the Turks, to unify Arabs in memory of the Arab revolt and encourage patriotic feeling. The use of an inclusive "we" suggests an assumption that the entire readership has participated in the movement, and, if they have not, it puts pressure on them to prove their patriotism and Arab identity.

The basis for this didactic language lies in a long history of Arab nationalism, beginning with Ottoman Tanzimat reform. In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire and other states began a period of modernization centered on a globalizing economy and increased central control of the state over its citizens. This process led to social, economic, and political shifts, such as rapid coastal urbanization and the emergence of newspapers and other means of spreading information. New ideologies, such as the revival in Ottoman cultural identity and the Arab nationalism that would follow developed in response to economic grievances and the loss of provincial power felt during the Tanzimat.[31] The following section provides a brief review of the major actors in the Arab nationalist movement leading up Faisal's state following World War

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[30] A*lifna al-aḥzāb wa ʿaqidna al-majāmʿa qabil al-ḥarib wa baʿdha wa khadhalna al-turk wa ḥulafa'him wa mazaqana ṣafuf jeyoshhum bihadha al-khadhlān tarākaḍna illa mīdān al-thura al-ʿarabīya zarāfātin wa* waḥdānan; Al-Raya Newspaper, Demands of the Citizens of Aleppo, 18 July 1919, Box 1, Folder 11, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1600/rec/1, 1-2.

[31] James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 13,14.

I. These actors and factions all had different motivations and specific grievances that fueled their support for Arab nationalism and later, an independent Syrian state.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Arab nationalist discourse and power was focused in the landowning, urban class.[32] Using Damascus as a case study, Philip Khoury argues that Arab nationalism grew in popularity among the bureaucratic elite during the Tanzimat era of the Ottoman Empire. At that time, the central state increasingly consolidated power in the outer provinces that had previously enjoyed relative autonomy, stripping the Arab elite families of much of their power in what was perceived as a process of "Turkification."[33] Ottomanism, as Khoury calls the movement towards an Ottoman national identity found in the Tanzimat reforms, arose in response to the increasing influence of the West in state affairs and culture, but this ideology took a more Turkish-centered approach with the rise of the CUP. Arabs who had trained in Istanbul as members of the Ottoman ruling class and who had been supportive of the Ottomanist ideology became disillusioned with the reforms they saw as exclusionary, such as the use of Turkish in all areas of provincial government, and many turned to Arab nationalism in response as they were forced out of government service.[34] As a result, Arab nationalism became popular in the landowning class and "liberal professions" such as law, journalism, and medicine in cities like Damascus.[35] This growing trend of secular nationalism in the Arab urban centers formed the basis of the Syrian Congress that formed after World War I to establish an independent state, and many of the petitions received by the King-Crane Commission reflect their rhetoric.

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[32] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,*1.
[33] Ibid., 95.
[34] Ibid., 58-59, 67, 100.
[35] Ibid., 72.

Of course, secularists were not the only supporters of Arab nationalism, as shown by the rhetoric from the religious elite, from Christian and Muslim sects, explored in Chapter 2. Arab Christians were especially in favor of the movement as an opportunity to lessen the importance of Islam in national identity and political power. By drawing focus to their Arab identity, they hoped to continue the increase in rights that came from the Ottoman reforms of the nineteenth century.[36] Historian Zeine N. Zeine claimed that Christians in Lebanon were critical to the early nationalist movement because "they considered themselves like an alien island in the ocean of Turkish Muslim sovereignty."[37] On the other hand, Christians in Lebanon had the most contact with Western influence, in the form of professed protection and shared faith, and were able to accumulate a great deal of wealth through trade. Both of these factors contributed to the minority of petitions in Lebanon that favored French influence after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, contrary to much of the Arab independence movement.[38]

Contemporary Islamic reformers, who "blamed corrupt and incompetent Turkish rule for Islam's degradation and weakness" against Western influence and encroachment, also turned to Arab nationalism as a solution.[39] For them, emphasis on the Arab identity was a return to their prominence in the rise of Islam and the Prophet.[40] Nationalism among the first generation of Islamic reformers in the nineteenth century arose first as a specifically Egyptian, rather than Arab, nationalism. Egyptian reformers such as Rifa'a Badawi Rafi' al-Tahtawi believed that certain elements of European society, such as a reformed education system, could be blended

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36 Ibid., 95-96.

37 Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 41.

38 Ibid., 42-43.

39 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 96.

40 Ibid.

with the culture and former economic dominance of ancient Egypt to create a new Egyptian patriotism, or hubb-al-watan.

Later reformers, such as Rashid Rida and those he looked up to, such as al-Afghani and 'Abduh, believed that reform could occur without any influence of European society or government simply through a pure and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. They believed that the morals outlined by the Prophet and the Qur'an were all that was needed for a modern society, as long as the community was united in faith. This Islamic unity supported the language, law, and social bonds of society. Following World War I, Rida felt that it was necessary to establish a new caliphate, including Turkey and the Arab provinces, to ward off imperialism and protect Islamic unity. While he saw the involvement of Turks as politically necessary, he believed that Arabs had "preserved the true spirit of Islam and the knowledge of Arabic."[41]

These ideas of reform throughout the long nineteenth century formed the basis for eventual support of Arab nationalism; a sense of unity, patriotism, and a rejection of European imperialism are major components of the nationalist rhetoric found in the petitions to the King-Crane Commission. Rida himself served as the president of the Syrian Congress in 1920.[42] The different interest groups associated with the independence movement reflect the variety in paths towards the Arab nationalist ideology, but they also reveal the possibilities for internal conflict. Even with the support of religious groups and the former Ottoman bureaucrats, Arab nationalism struggled to achieve widespread popularity, and it remained largely concentrated in cities and the social elite, resulting in the struggles Emir Faisal and the Syrian Congress faced in gaining support for their independent Arab state in the interwar period.

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41 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 228-229, 241-242.

42 Ibid., 227.

As James Gelvin explains, a Syrian Arab government led by Saʿid al-Jaza'iri, a member of a prominent Damascene family, was forcibly removed by the British in favor of Faisal's leadership. This conflict gained opponents of the new state from its infancy. To try to win favor among the Syrian masses, Faisal instituted welfare programs that had once been under the control of the Ottoman central government and began a propaganda campaign that included sending members of his bureaucracy on tours across the region. These tours were intended to make local notables aware of the new government and secure their favor, using bribes where necessary.[43]

However, the majority of his power remained concentrated in Damascus, as local leaders did not trust his new government and disagreed with him on political issues like trade policy. Further, Faisal's government struggled to strengthen an economy reliant on British funding.[44] Economic trouble and continuing opposition at the local level led Faisal to allow the formation of a Syrian Congress in the middle of 1919. In Damascus, the opposition to Faisal's government was made even clearer by the elections; out of sixteen seats, two nationalists were chosen to represent the city at the new congress. Despite this expression of doubt among Syrians about the current leadership, the congress attempted to more fully unify the region in a political message. Cities like Aleppo and Homs had not previously been as focused on the transition from Ottoman loyalty to Arab nationalism, but the congress allowed them to voice their concerns and protect their interests in the capital of Damascus, while accepting the nationalist agenda as a byproduct.[45]

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43 Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties,* 26-28.
44 Ibid., 30, 32.
45 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 86-88.

Gelvin writes that, in preparation for the King-Crane Commission, propaganda took a written form as leaflets were distributed throughout Damascus in support of Syrian independence, although he does not identify the author or distributor. However, he points out that the language they employed, specifically references to natural boundaries and Syrian unity, were increasingly found in newspapers, like al-Raya, and other forms of public discourse, including graffiti. This development of a uniform rhetorical campaign occurred over just five months and formed the basis for the Damascus Program found in the petition written by the Syrian Congress, presented to the commission on July 3.[46]

Journalists in the region played a significant role in spreading this Arab nationalist rhetoric to the masses, as shown in al-Raya. The rhetoric found in the al-Raya issue reflects this pro-Arab nationalist ideology in addition to more focused support for Syrian independence and the ideals of self-determination they attributed to President Wilson. The same rhetoric appears in the petitions gathered by the King-Crane Commission, reflecting a transfer and sharing of nationalist language among the intellectual elite and religious and political leaders at the time.

Most of the petitions, in their first demand for an independent Syrian state, refer to the "natural borders" of Syria, a direct reference to the rhetoric popularized in public discourse around this time. These borders, according to the petition written by the Syrian Congress, are defined by "the Tauric System on the North; Rafeh and a line running from al-Juf to the south of the Syrian and the Hejazian line to Aqaba on the South; the Euphrates and Khabur Rivers and a line extending east of Abu Kamal to the east of al-Juf on the East; and the Mediterranean on the

[46] Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties* 150-152; Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 119.

West."[47] Many other petitions in the archive replicate this language in some form, indicating its pervasiveness in the public discourse as a justification for their claim to statehood.[48]

This geographic basis for the Syrian national identity can clearly be observed in the circulating rhetoric. For example, it is also found in al-Raya, which claims that "because the lands from the Taurus mountains to the Gulf of Aqaba are populated with the majority Syrian Arabs, no other people disputes their claim to the land."[49] In referencing the physical boundaries of the region they claim for an independent state, the petitions, along with the newspaper, are calling to mind the long history of Arab identity and associating it with the permanence of nature.

Another example of the continuation of specific nationalist language from the broader movement into the petitions is the strength with which petitioners rejected European influence, especially from the French. While some of the petitions gathered from Lebanon did request a French mandate, these voices were in the minority, and most argued that they "do not acknowledge any right claimed by the French Government in any part whatever of our Syrian country" and would only accept assistance from Great Britain "provided that such assistance does not infringe the complete independence and unity of our country and that the duration of such assistance does not exceed [twenty years]."[50] Their concern over French and British influence goes back to the anti-imperialist sentiments of nationalist figures like Rashid Rida. Al-Raya newspaper also spoke in anti-imperialist language, referencing "the ambitions of

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47 Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919, box 16, folder 6, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/2527/rec/2.

48 *Yuhaddaha al-ṭabīʿa al-jughrāfī*; for an example of this rhetoric in the Arabic, see Petition from Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1630/rec/189.

49 Al-Raya Newspaper, Demands of the Citizens of Aleppo, 18 July 1919.

50 Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919.

colonialism" (ma*ṭāmi' al-isti'mār*) and "their tricks" (*makāyidhum*) as an obstacle to Syrian independence.[51] This element of Arab nationalism would have made America and President Wilson, with expectations of his support for self-determination, particularly appealing to the petitioners, who believed that "the American Nation is farthest from any thought of colonization and has no political ambition in our country.[52]"

In addition to incorporating the Arab nationalist rhetoric that flourished in public discourse at the time, the petitioners to the King-Crane Commission were conscious of how their demands would be perceived by Americans. In an effort to garner support from the commissioners that they hoped would be relayed at the peace conference, the petitioners used specific language that they believed would satisfy expectations of a democratic and pluralistic society. As a result, many of the petitions contain democratic "buzzwords" in their descriptions of an ideal political future. For example, a document labelled by the archive as a petition from Muslims in al-Lādhiqīyah uses extremely detailed wording in their request for a democratic monarchy, demanding that "the government of this Syrian country be a civil, parliamentary monarchy, in which its provinces are administered in a broad, decentralized manner and the rights of minorities are preserved" (*takūn ḥukūma hadhihi al-bilād al-sūrīya malakīya madanīya nīyābīya tadār maqāṭ'ātaha 'ala ṭarīqa al-lamarkazīya al-wāsi' wa taḥ*afi*ẓa fīha ḥaqūq al-aqalliyāt*).[53] This language, emphasizing the protection of minorities and democratic government, is an important element to the petitions' rhetorical structure. While a main goal is certainly to make their case for Arab nationalism and demand an independent state, the appeals to American democratic ideals work to show the commissioners that an independent state is not

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51 Al-Raya Newspaper, Demands of the Citizens of Aleppo, 18 July 1919.
52 Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919.
53 Petition from Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah, 1919.

just justified but also viable. In this meeting of the Arab nationalist movement with western liberalism, Arab leaders had to craft their arguments in a way that was most likely to get the international support they needed in an increasingly globalized nation-state system.

Conclusion

The King-Crane Commission was an ambitious project to gather information on public opinion in the Arab provinces for the Paris Peace Conference. Undertaken in just a few months, the commissioners gathered signatures from thousands of individuals and made broad generalizations of the major "programs" supported by the different social and political groups. These groups attempted to use the commission as an opportunity to voice their concerns and demands, a representation of decades of growing nationalist ideology, at the international level. The petitions themselves serve as examples of the prevailing rhetoric throughout the nationalist movement, with clear references to the ideas of previous nationalist figures and the propaganda found in newspapers and pamphlets. Moreover, they show how this rhetoric was blended with a consideration of their American, and more generally, European, audience by incorporating language that would satisfy western liberal concerns over democracy and minority protections. Chapter 2 will continue this discussion of rhetoric in the petitions and how it was crafted towards the American commissioners with a specific focus on religious leaders and nonsectarian language.

Rhetorical Strategy in Petitioning the Commission

The summer of 1919 was a period of upheaval for both the Arab provinces and the international world order. The Ottoman Empire had collapsed, leaving the provinces under its far-reaching control uncertain in their political future, and the Paris Peace Conference was attempting to manage the often-conflicting interests in peace negotiations and state planning as the dust settled from World War I. In the Arab provinces, the Syrian Congress was elected in an attempt to unify the myriad of nationalist voices and religious interests that had undermined Emir Faisal's ability to shape a coherent and stable Syrian state.[54] This chapter will argue that Faisal's state contradicts Fanar Haddad's theory on the use of rhetoric that draws on memory (or perceived memory) shared by religious sects to reduce sectarian tensions and unite a population.[55] Instead, the elite leaders of the sects attempted to employ this language in their petitions to the King-Crane Commission, but not to establish or encourage vertical legitimacy for the state among their followers. More likely, it was in an effort to secure American support for Arab independence by drawing from historical perceptions of American preoccupation with sectarian divisions.

The commission report, which remained unpublished until 1922, recommended an American mandate over a unified Syria (including Palestine and Lebanon), governed by a "democratic, constitutional monarchy" under Emir Faisal.[56] These recommendations were based largely on the petitions heard from local religious and political groups, as discussed in Chapter 1.

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[54] Philip Shukry Khoury, 1983, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 86-88.

[55] Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[56] King-Crane Commission Report, submitted by Charles R. Crane and Henry Churchill King, 28 August 1919, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 4, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/ref/collection/kingcrane/id/718.

Even with the commission's own concerns over propaganda, the consensus by the petitions on Syrian unity and independence under Muslim leadership is rather surprising on two fronts, at least for the region including modern day Lebanon. As Makdisi writes in Culture of Sectarianism, the religious groups of Mount Lebanon were engulfed in sectarian conflict less than sixty years previously, so their ability to transform into a unified front and demand independence under Greater Syria, nearly regardless of religion, might have been difficult to predict.[57] On the other hand, the Arab nationalism that overtook religious identity as the dominant narrative in the King-Crane petitions had previously struggled to solidify as a single voice, with different classes and regional populations disagreeing on its goals and methods, so it seems remarkable that in the few months immediately surrounding the establishment of the Syrian Congress a single nationalist discourse would have the strength and legitimacy to drown out religious interests.[58]

Haddad's theory could serve as a possible explanation for the consensus seen in the petitions. His book, Sectarianism in Iraq, presents a plausible mechanism for a shift from sectarian to nationalist identity. Haddad describes "banal sectarianism" as merely a manifestation of sect identity as basic religious identity; religion exists as a layer to an individual's collective identity but rarely influences everyday interactions among sects. On the other hand, "aggressive sectarianism" refers to a far more prominent role for religious identity in everyday life, to an extreme that others or seeks to oppress other religious groups.[59] For clarity, however, I will refer to the kind of oppositional, aggressive sectarianism that the commissioners were concerned with simply as "sectarianism" in this paper and the more banal expressions of religious identity as

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[57] Ussama Makdisi, 2000, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

[58] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 83.

[59] Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 26-27.

"religious difference." This change is more in line with Ussama Makdisi's definition of sectarianism as "the deployment of religious heritage as a primary marker of modern political identity" that cannot be "taken for granted as a self-evident phenomenon."[60]

Haddad suggests that sectarianism occurs when the nationalist narrative fails to tie together individual sects into one diverse nation by emphasizing memories shared on a national level regardless of religious identity, so the "perceived overlap between sects" narrows due to state policies favoring one sect's narrative symbols and memories over another's.[61] Of course, his theory is modelled on the divisions between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims in Iraq in the late twentieth century, a very different context than the Muslim and Christian populations of the interwar Levant. Still, his model poses a possible means of analysis for the emphasis on Arab nationalism and Syrian unity in the rhetoric from Emir Faisal and the Syrian Congress, going so far as to blame other outside factors, such as French intervention, for any remnants of sectarianism.

Following Haddad's model, there should have been some effort to reference religious memory in the public rhetoric to appeal to as many religious identities as possible, despite the failure of slogans promoting secular government, and this strategy deserves far greater attention than it has received. The following section will show how Faisal and the Syrian Congress deviated from this model in their attempts to overcome religious differences that had previously resulted in devastating sectarian conflict, as seen in Mount Lebanon, while unanimously agreeing on a Muslim ruler in its official petition to the King-Crane Commission. I will then discuss the petitions from religious sects in the region, especially French-occupied Lebanon, to show that

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60 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism,* 7.

61 Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq,* 35.

they did utilize the process theorized by Haddad to attract American support for the new power structure formed in vacuum left by the war.

Nationalism Through Nonsectarian Rhetoric

According to James Gelvin's book Divided Loyalties, the emerging state under Faisal struggled to earn widespread support. Elite leaders loyal to an Ottoman, and later Arab, identity in the period leading up to and during World War I espoused a nationalism infused with predominantly Western ideals such as modernism and secularism that did not trickle down to the majority non-elite population in the region, who were more focused on the economic grievances caused by the war, Ottoman tax policy, and the globalizing markets.[62] Further, Emir Faisal faced varied, and quite severe, opposition, coming to power in Damascus largely with the help of T.E. Lawrence and the British forces and armed conflict with local anti-British Ottoman loyalists.[63] Beginning with nineteenth century Ottoman reforms, "the expansion of the breadth and magnitude of the jurisdiction of government and its assumption of responsibilities associated with modern states," along with urbanization and the rise of newspapers, clubs, and other access to state rhetoric by the middle class, allowed for a top-down construction of a nationalist discourse. Still, Faisal and his Damascus government were never able to secure universal support, especially from the ruling notables of local governments.[64]Makdisi argues that the sectarian conflict seen in Mount Lebanon in the 1860's took place in "the era of the in-between," after the end of autonomy granted by Ottomans to provincial social hierarchies but before the

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62 James L. Gelvin, 1999, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 18.

63 Ibid., 26,27; Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 79.

64 Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 14, 15, 28.

emergence of modern nationalism.[65] A similar "in-between" took place in the interwar period, when the Ottoman Empire had collapsed, leaving a vacuum of power for a new, nationalist political structure to emerge with the prospect of European imperialism looming heavily over their efforts towards legitimacy. While the local political elite seized the opportunity to reinvent the power structure in sectarian terms under the reformed Ottoman province in the 1860s, the various nationalist voices throughout Greater Syria rushed to declare a strong position either supporting or opposing the Arab government under Emir Faisal, seeking stability and Arab control above all else in the face of European scrutiny.[66]

Therefore, despite his struggle for popularity, Faisal and his government ardently pursued a strong Arab identity to gain more widespread support, encouraging rhetorical measures like petitions in newspapers and other areas of public discourse, including the distribution of leaflets in Damascus with demands similar to that of the above petition from the Syrian Congress.[67] These efforts to establish a new power structure centered on Arab nationalism to gain legitimacy among the general masses on the eve of the King-Crane Commission can be compared to the development of family-based sectarian rule in 1860s Mount Lebanon, that is, as an era of "in between" where political influence was won or lost with a shift in the distribution of power. In essence, groups chose to consolidate around Faisal and gain whatever influence they could to prevent a greater power loss in an uncertain future.

Gelvin does a remarkable job in his book of describing this rhetorical project of manufacturing nationalism, and he comments briefly on the effort to downplay religious identity with the slogan "Religion belongs to God, the nation to all." He argues that it was largely

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65 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism,* 166.
66 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism, 67;* Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 80.
67 Ibid., 151.

rejected by the general population because it had little basis in reality; it was a top-down approach from Faisal and his only moderately popular state to simply ignore the religious diversity of the population.[68] What remains to be explored is the exact extent to which religious sects accepted the state's nationalist narrative in general to avoid a recurrence of sectarian conflict, or at least the perception of such conflict, while the Paris Peace Conference looked on.

Supporting Rhetoric in the Petitions

The demands made by the Syrian Congress when they met in Damascus in July formed the basis for both the local delegations' petitions and the recommendations outlined in the commission's report, and they were published in an English-language document submitted to the commission. This "official" petition will serve as the basis for my textual analysis of the others collected from the delegations for religious sects throughout Greater Syria to explore how shared memory among Arabs was perpetuated in these official communications with the commission. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that these petitions were written for an American audience (the commissioners) with significant perceived authority over the petitioners' future as a state (the reality of this authority, of course, is a discussion for another paper). While the document was originally printed in English by the congress, I include the Arabic translations for key phrases to show how they were represented in the local petitions, which were typed or handwritten in Arabic. The specific Arabic word choice is taken from a document labeled by the archive as representing Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah, but its demands match the Syrian Congress original in order and content.[69] A summary of their demands is as follows:

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[68] Ibid., 182, 184.

[69] Petition from Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1630/rec/189.

1. "Complete political independence" (al-*istiqlāl as-sīyāsī al-tām*) for Syria within specific geographic borders,
2. A "democratic, civil, constitutional monarchy" (*malakīya madanīya nīyābīya*) with a decentralized administrative style, a focus on protecting the rights of minorities, and Emir Faisal as king,
3. A protest against Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the mandate system,
4. Assuming the implementation of Article 22, technical and economic assistance (*musāʿada fanīya* wa iqtiṣādīya) from the United States for a maximum of twenty years,
5. Great Britain as an alternate choice for mandatory power,
6. The rejection of any French claims in Syria,
7. Opposition to a Jewish state and migration to Palestine and affirmation of Jewish rights in Syria,
8. "No separation" (ʿadm faṣl) of Palestine or Lebanon from Syria,
9. Independence for Mesopotamia, and
10. A rejection of the "secret treaties" (al-*muʿāhadāt al-sirrīya*).[70]

Added in pen on the petition is a note that "the fifth article was passed by a very large majority; all the other articles were accepted unanimously."[71] This suggests that the only point of (minor) contention within the congress was whether Britain should take up the mandatory power should the United States refuse, with France presumably being the other rejected option. This is rather confusing given that the next article, that France has no claims whatsoever on Syrian soil, was reportedly passed with no such contention. It is possible that those who opposed the fifth article did not intend France to be their preferred second choice but simply wanted to emphasize

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[70] Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919, box 16, folder 6, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/2527/rec/2.

[71] Ibid.

the United States as the only acceptable mandatory, but this slight deviance from perfect agreement reveals a carefully worded presentation of unanimity representative of all of Greater Syria at a time when it simply did not exist in reality, as established by Gelvin.

More interestingly, the petition calls for Emir Faisal, a prominent member of the Hashemite family, to be king in the constitutional monarchy, as noted above, and it declares that Faisal "carried on a glorious struggle in the cause of our liberation and merited our full confidence and entire reliance."[72] Those are rather strong words of support for such a well-known Muslim nobleman to rule a religiously diverse state; the population numbers for the region of Greater Syria published alongside the commission's report, while unclear in origin, reflect a Muslim population of close to 2.4 million but also show about 588,000 Christians, 140,000 Druze, 110,000 Jews, and 45,000 "others."[73]

However, the petition lacks any significant reference to this religious diversity or any attempt to reinforce the notion that religious minorities have a specific shared memory. It does emphasize in its seventh demand, as a follow-up to its rejection of Jewish migration to Palestine and the idea of a Jewish homeland, that the Jewish population in Greater Syria "shall enjoy [Syrian] common rights and assume the common responsibilities." However, it is unclear if this line is meant to reassure Jewish Arabs or the American commissioners. The second demand, that the Syrian state will focus on "safe-guarding the rights of minorities," also has a vagueness to it that suggests it may only be there to satisfy the expectations of the American commissioners. In reality, the petition distributed by the Syrian Congress seems remarkably ambivalent to religious concerns for independence. It is more focused on hitting buzzwords like "democratic,"

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*, 2 December 1922, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 10A, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1239/rec/15, 5.

"decentralized," and "constitutional" to satisfy international observers rather than establishing internal legitimacy.[74] In contrast to Haddad's model of emphasizing shared religious memory, the state clearly took a stance of ignoring religion altogether. Despite the lack of popularity among the general public of the state's secular slogans, much of the Arab-first dialogue was worked into the petitions from religious sects to the commissioners. However, they also include far more direct references to America, in rather glowing terms, and France, usually to protest alleged abuse or obstruction. These points, among others that will be discussed in the following section, reflect a broader discourse of nationalism that includes hints at shared religious memory.

Most of the petitions, follow a general formula copied from the "official" petition published by the Syrian Congress when they met in July 1919, with each varying in its degree of similarity. Generally, they contain an introductory paragraph introducing the group represented, approval of the delegates to represent them to the commission, and occasionally a specific grievance, such as protest against French obstruction. An itemized list of demands usually follows that typically uses the Syrian Congress demands as a basis while adding, deleting, or rearranging the requests. The closing paragraph often includes persuasive arguments such as directly referencing President Wilson and his speeches or reiterating their desire for an American mandate.

In the opening lines of the petitions, the group typically defines itself in several ways, with some falling largely into economic or social categories, such as the carpenters' guild in Tripoli, and others seeming to emphasize their religious identity. This study focuses exclusively on the petitions where religion is the only identifier mentioned or the most emphasized. For example, one less detailed petition simply claims to represent the wishes of the Druze of Beirut,

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[74] Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919.

while another (that will be further discussed below) represents Muslims and Christians of Tripoli but also indicates their economic status as property owners and agriculturalists (a*ṣḥāb amlāk wa muzāri'īn*).[75] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the qualifications that follow "Muslims and Christians" in the latter petition seem to simply suggest that all of the Muslims and Christians of Tripoli are represented, regardless of socio-economic status, leading the reader to believe that religion is the dominant identifier intended by the group. In fact, in his translation found at the bottom of the petition, Sami Haddad, the physician and translator for the commissioners, drops all of the socio-economic qualifiers and refers to the group simply as the "the Mohommadans and Christians of Kadar-Husen-al-Akrad, that refers to Tripoli," so the commissioners themselves would have missed these added qualifiers.[76]

Of course, the petitioners tried to appeal to the commissioners and to understand the areas that would be most important to gain their support. As prior interaction with Americans revolved around the Protestant missionaries, whose instinct, as Makdisi argues, "was to classify what they saw in terms that made sense to them," namely, in sectarian terms, it is understandable that many of these petitions would highlight their religious identity as a primary marker that was familiar to Americans.[77] The missionaries had routinely written about the people they interacted with solely in regards to their religious affiliation, downplaying complex social and economic divisions in the region that would have been unfamiliar to them. It is not surprising that the commission's translator, a native Protestant trained at the Syrian Protestant College, would simplify the petition

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[75] Druze of Beirut and their Demands, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 5, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934,Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/562/rec/44; Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1646/rec/184.

[76] Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919.

[77] Ussama Makdisi, 2008, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 90.

further to the primary identifier his colleagues would understand.[78] The petitioners likely recognized the emphasis historically placed on religious divisions by Americans in the region, and the distrust and dislike for non-Christians that came with it, so a nonsectarian tone coming from religious groups in support of a nationalist narrative was a strategic appeal to these American biases. Similarly, another petition states that it represents the desires of Muslims from Arab tribes, but it can be assumed that the commissioners would not recognize any of the social or political complexities implied by tribal affiliation and would instead focus on this petition simply as an example of the Muslim perspective.[79]

Unlike the petition from the Syrian Congress, the petitions that self-identify as coming from religious sects reflect a much clearer effort to frame Arab nationalism as a blend of the diverse experiences of the various religious communities. Specifically, they drew from shared memory and perceptions to support demands for unified independence. As I will show, these petitions form a much more thorough attempt at tolerance of religious diversity to support a nationalist discourse than the rhetoric spread by Faisal's state. More importantly, they display a carefully and strategically crafted message to the American commissioners and other observers at the Paris Peace Conference that they can meet existing expectations and requirements for an independent Arab state, namely democratic and religiously tolerant ideals.

The petition labelled as representing Christians and Muslims in Tripoli begins by denouncing the French occupying government for attempting to prevent their delegation from presenting the petition to the commission, accusing the French of obstructing the delegates with "armed strength and threats with bayonets from the French military." This rather serious

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Petition from Arab- Akrade tribes, Tripoli, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1615/rec/182.

accusation from a petition representing both Muslims and Christians emphasizes that abuse from and negative perceptions of the French government and military was a shared experience for sects in the area. Their call for independence and rejection of French rights in Syria are therefore more clearly a nonsectarian, universal demand. The petition also says, "long live Syrian independence, long live America, long live Britain" (ya*ḥī al-istiqlāl as-sūrī, yaḥī amīrkā, yaḥī brītānīa*) before beginning the list of demands. This language continues at the bottom of the petition, where the group places "all the responsibility of [their] future fate on the human [sic] America and Great Britain."[80] Of course, it is important to recognize that at least part of the reason for this language is likely that the petitioners were looking to secure approval from the American commissioners and a recommendation that America accept the mandate should one be deemed necessary, but the general preference for an American mandate over any other is also rooted in a shared memory of positive interaction with Americans in the past (through Protestant missionaries and their opposition to Turkish military atrocities) and shared perceptions of Americans as defenders of democracy and revolutionary hopes.

These perceived experiences and expectations associated with the United States, especially in the petitions from Mount Lebanon discussed in this paper, would date back to the Protestant missionary work in the area throughout the nineteenth century, the first major interaction with Americans in the region. Because of Ottoman laws against converting Muslims in the empire, missionaries instead focused on the converting the Orthodox Christian population, hoping to establish through them a native evangelical church that would organically gain a following from other faiths.[81] The missionaries themselves believed their role to be "arbitrators

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[80] Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919.

[81] Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 38.

between the various communities" and "above" the sectarianism they observed in a mission to modernize, and eventually convert, the entire population.[82] While their evangelical efforts were largely a failure, they nevertheless brought medical knowledge, technology, and education that were often well-received by the people of Mount Lebanon regardless of sect.[83] Memory of this interaction with Americans would be especially strong in the petitions from Mount Lebanon.

According to Patrick, "the people, or at least the elites, of Greater Syria sincerely admired the United States in the early twentieth century," but he argues that this position was based on an overemphasis on the good works of Americans in the region and imagined visions of the country's values paired with either a misunderstanding or downplaying of the reality of America's increasing involvement in global affairs.[84] While the modern technology and medicine brought by the American missionaries were broadly popular and, as Makdisi suggests, they "operated outside a formal European or American colonial setting," it is important to remember that the missionaries based much of their effort from the beginning on a prediction and eager anticipation of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and Islam more generally.[85]

The rhetoric in the religious petitions reflects a blend of seemingly genuine belief that the United States held no colonial aspirations in the region and attempts to flatter the commissioners with overblown praise. The petition from the Syrian Congress claims they would prefer American economic assistance because "the American Nation is farthest from any thought of colonization and has no political ambition in our country," and this sentiment seems to have

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82 Ussama Makdisi, 1997, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity," *The American Historical Review*, no. 3: 680. doi:10.2307/2171506, 691.

83 Ibid, 695.

84 Andrew Patrick, "'These People Know about Us': A Reconsideration of Greater Syrian Attitudes Towards the United States in the First World War Era," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 3 (2014): 397–411. doi:10.1080/00263206.2013.870893, 397-398.

85 Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 176; Kidd, 40-41

trickled down into the local petitions as well.[86] Meanwhile, Patrick writes that the commission was aware of the potential for mere flattery in the Arabs' praises of America and President Wilson, likely because they were perceived as the most promising avenue for true independence.[87] Whether or not this likelihood existed in reality, this common trust in America, based in remembered and imagined experience, moved past religious divisions in the petitions towards a nation unified in its approach to global powers.

Another document in the archives, while it does not have a clear attribution to a particular sect, is useful to this study as a strong example of the type of rhetoric that was circulating at the time encouraging nonsectarian nationalism with emphasis on a rejection of imperialism. It is a typed complaint about French occupation in Greater Syria, beginning with the phrase "we accept no assistance [mandate] except from America" (*lā naqbal mu'awana illā āmrīkā*). It goes on to say that there is "no life without independence" (*lā ḥaya illā b'listiqlāl*) and accuses France of "robbing" (salb) Syrians of their "national freedom" (*ḥurīyatunā al-qaumīya*), "[reviving] the spirit of fanaticism" (a*ḥīā ruḥ* at-*ta'aṣṣ*ub), and "[dividing] the Syrians into different communities and sects" (farq as-*sūrīyn tawā'if wa-adīyānā*).[88] The document attempts to blame the French (whether the author meant the post-war occupying government or French influence more broadly is unknown) for many of the problems and divisions facing Syrians, including sectarian tensions.

All of the religious group petitions mentioned thus far are from the geographic region occupied by the French government by the end of World War I, so it is understandable that the anti-French sentiments embodied in this document would serve as a unifying, nonsectarian issue.

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[86] Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919.

[87] Patrick, "'These People Know about Us',” 403.

[88] Petition against the French government, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, copyright Stanford University.

Arguing quite boldly that the French caused sectarianism in the region is a convenient, if factually questionable, argument both for national independence and the end of French imperialism in the region, and one that would assuage American perceptions and fears of sectarianism. However, more interestingly, this document seems to be directed towards Arabs, rather than the petitions' focus on the commissioners. While the state did sponsor or at least encourage the kind of top-down Arab nationalist discourse discussed earlier in newspapers and other publications directly to the people, this document speaks to the nonsectarian rhetoric found in the petitions from religious groups. It urges Arabs to "set aside fanaticism and call for [their] independence," (*dʿū* at-*taʿaṣṣub jānibān wa-nādū bistiqlā*lkum) a direct appeal to unity regardless of religious identity.

These claims about the French were especially salient, and likely quite convincing, to the Arabs and commissioners who read them, as the bulk of the petitions explored in this paper came from the territory occupied by the French at the end of WWI.[89] While not all of the Christian groups in the French-occupied territory supported Faisal's government, by 1919 many of them were even more opposed to the French, despite a shared religion. The colonial economic investments largely favored the coastal regions, and they had also begun to lose support from Christians who believed the French were doing too little to protect them from the Muslim majority.[90] It may seem counterintuitive that Christian groups that feared Muslim aggression would support Faisal's state during the commission, but it is possible that the rhetoric shown above was at least modestly persuasive. Khoury claims the French were motivated to remove Faisal from Damascus out of fear that the Lebanese Christians would eventually fall completely

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89 Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*, 2 December 1922.

90 Philip Shukry Khoury, 1987, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945,* Princeton: Princeton University Press., 32, 41.

under his rule.[91] At the very least, positive perceptions of America would have made the suggested mandate a favorable alternative to French rule with minority protections promised under the majority-Muslim state.

While it is important to remember that the religious petitions still would have come from the elite leaders of the sect, and therefore cannot truly be considered a "bottom-up" alternative to the state propaganda, they still represent local voices separate from Faisal's state, and they provide a justification for Arab nationalism (here, anti-French and pro-American sentiment) by directing nonsectarian rhetoric toward their followers, where Faisal seems to present none other than blind loyalty to an authority simply because they are Arab. In his study of the 'Alawis, Winter points out that too much of the existing literature focuses on the theological differences as the center of sectarianism without taking into consideration the "mundane."[92] In the same vein, it is possible to view the language in these petitions as an attempt by the religious elite to draw attention away from the theological differences among the Syrian population and focus on the economic and social consequences of ongoing colonialism that would make a shared Arab identity, above sect, far more convincing. However, viewing nationalism clearly through this lens of sectarianism is complicated by points of implied or direct opposition to Faisal's narrative, and they will be explored further in the following section.

Exceptions to, and Failures of, Nonsectarianism

Despite the overall attempt to reflect a unified front of committed nationalism and dedication to democratic ideals to the American commissioners, certain areas in the sects'

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91 Ibid., 41.

92 Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, 6.

petitions reveal points of deviation from the nationalist narrative. By returning to the petition from the Syrian Congress, presumably the original voice for the narrative, and comparing it to the other delegations' petitions, it is possible to show deviations in the specific demands and the order in which they are placed to reveal the concerns and priorities specific to the different sects in relation to their position in the new nationalist narrative, such as the choice of mandate.

One relatively minor way in which the petitions may have deviated from the official narrative is the specific order in which they listed their demands. It was entirely possible for each group to simply submit a copy of the Congress petition, as seems to have been the case with Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah, but some sects specifically chose to rewrite the demands, making their order or omission significant.[93] For example, the petition from Muslims and Christians in Tripoli places the request that Emir Faisal become king as their seventh, separate demand with no further elaboration, while the Syrian Congress included this point in its second demand for a democratic monarchy with a justification of Faisal's heroism in fighting for the Arab cause.[94] Assuming this separation and rather shortened request was moved to the bottom of the petition intentionally, this could reflect less devotion to Faisal as king for his religious identity or general leadership. It is difficult to determine an exact cause for this hesitation, whether the Christian and Muslim elite in the city were worried about the possible effect of his clear religious affiliations on sect relations or they simply disliked his policy, but they did not fall in line with the official narrative despite the nonsectarian rhetoric found elsewhere in the document.

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[93] Petition from Muslims in Al Lādhiqīyah.

[94] Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919; Petition from the Syrian Conference in Damascus, 3 July 1919.

The petition from the Native Protestant Church of Beirut includes a request that the Syrian state "have no political connection whatever with the Kingdom of the Hedjaz."[95] This could reflect anxiety that Faisal's family and religious background could dominate an independent Syria and an attempt to emphasize their desire to separate themselves from traditional Muslim authority in the region. More interestingly, the petition lacks all of the added language about America and France, possibly because, as Protestants, they would have a more deeply established prior relationship with American missionaries and not feel the need to emphasize it in their communication with the commission.[96] This puts the rhetoric found in the other petitions more clearly in a frame of appealing to the commissioners, not Arabs as a whole or followers of their sect (with the exception of the anti-French document discussed earlier), highlighting the performance aspect of formation of shared memory and identity. These departures from the specific demands found in the other petitions suggest that while sectarian tensions might not have been severe at this point in history, there were certainly moments when minority sects were not entirely comfortable with the demands they were making and supporting in front of the commission. The presence of the nonsectarian rhetoric towards the commissioners despite these anxieties suggests that satisfying American observers was perceived as the primary hurdle to achieving independence, and following the plan laid out by Faisal was their best chance.

Another document, labeled in the archive as coming from Beirut (although it should be noted that the document contains no direct confirmation of this), mirrors the rhetoric of the

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[95] Petition from the National Evangelical Church of Beirut, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 5, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/565/rec/201.

[96] Ibid.

unattributed document denouncing France discussed earlier to argue the opposite.[97] Where the anti-French document claims "no life without independence" (*lā ḥaya illā bi'l-istiqlāl*), this one declares "we have no life except with France" (*lā ḥaya linā illā bifaransā).* It also employs direct references to sect in its opening line, "the Moslems, the Druz, the Shia, the Jew, the Christian all have no life except with France" (al-muslim wa al-*druzī wa al-shī'ī wa al-isrā'īlī wa al-masīḥī jamī' lā ḥaya lihum illā bifaransā*).[98] This document shows that it was not just the religious groups in support of Faisal and his plan for Syrian independence under an American mandate who used nonsectarian rhetoric to gather support for their cause, but that it was utilized by different interest groups as a way to "check the boxes" of what they perceived to be the top priorities for the commissioners.

In addition to deviations from the Syrian Congress petition, we must look at how religious sect was chosen, or, more importantly, not chosen, as the primary identifier for certain groups. This paper has so far studied the rhetoric of petitions that claim to represent the members of a specific sect or sects in areas like Tripoli and Beirut, but other petitions can be found in the archive representing other social or economic groups. For example, a petition from the carpenters' guild in Tripoli repeats most of the demands from the religious petitions and the Syrian Congress, and another, while much shorter and generally focused on Lebanon's status as an administrative unit of a united Syria over other concerns, claims to represent the interests of the "people" (*ahālī*) of Bourj el-Barajneh in Mount Lebanon with no mention of any divisive

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97 Petition from Beirut, supporting the French, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1382/rec/183.

98 Ibid.

identifiers at all.[99] Clearly, there would be some cross-over, with some individuals belonging to both a religious and economic identity, so the choice for certain petitions to be labeled as religious is an interesting one. For some, religion simply was not their primary identity and did not need to be represented as such to the commission.

Further, there are some moments of opposition to Faisal's state narrative that seem to transcend sect. While it is clear why a Protestant group might profess concerns over a close relationship with the Kingdom of the Hedjaz, opposition to America as the mandatory power in favor of a relationship with the French was a significant minority opinion in the commission's report (almost fifteen percent of the petitions collected), and it seems to have received support from a number of religious groups.[100] The Sufi leader Ali Ashi Saadi of the Ṣadīa tariqa argues for a French mandate because of its "resources, experience, and geographic situation" (al-*muwārid wa al-*khibra wa al-*mauqʿ al-jaghrāfī*), and a Greek Orthodox petition says that "the administrative council [of Lebanon] and the French government must come to an agreement regarding the kind of assistance."[101]

These moments of opposition and shows that religious identity, unlike what the American missionaries of the previous century might have believed, did not necessarily form the primary dividing lines in Arab society. Sectarian divisions certainly did exist, as the Mount Lebanon violence would still be in relatively recent memory, but it might not have been critical to the

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[99] Petition from members of carpenters' guild in Tripoli, 9 July 1919, Case II, drawer 19, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/722/rec/187.

[100] Document listing significant conclusions from the petitions.

[101] Petition from Ali Ashi Saadi in Beirut, Record series 15/13/22, Box 16: King-Crane Commission (May-August 1919) Folder 4, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1878/rec/181; Petition in Arabic from a Greek Orthodox community, Record series 15/13/22, Box 16: King-Crane Commission (May-August 1919) Folder 4, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1874/rec/206.

success or failure of Faisal's national project if not for the perceived American focus on religion. The majority of the rhetoric in the religious petitions is directed to the American commissioners, especially with its focus on American and French interaction as shared memory, rather than tapping into shared grievances for Arabs such as increased Turkish provincial influence throughout the long nineteenth century.

Conclusion

The nonsectarian rhetoric employed by the religious groups was likely not intended to foster vertical legitimacy for Faisal's government as it might appear at first glance. Instead, they crafted rhetoric aimed at encouraging religious unity to compete with other ideas in the region for a state (or states) after the Ottoman Empire in gaining approval from the Paris Peace Conference. This moment in history can be easily compared to the 1860s, when conflict left Arabs without a stable political power structure or clear identity, but here they turned outside to an increasingly interconnected and equally unstable world order to gain external legitimacy for a modern state. Regardless of accuracy, America was perceived as Syrians' best chance for independence and an end to European colonialism. Prior experiences with sect-minded missionaries in Lebanon left the impression that overcoming expectations of devastating sectarian violence in the Middle East held by the commissioners would be necessary to achieve their support.

This conception of sectarianism as an identity manufactured simply for it to be disproved to outside observers is quite different from what we might expect to see, especially in a time of political instability in a religiously diverse region. Unlike what we might expect from Haddad's model, Faisal's government made little attempt to either stoke sectarian tensions to gather

support or credibly assuage concerns for minority protections through shared memory. Instead, certain religious groups chose Faisal, with his extensive negotiations with the Paris Peace Conference, as the safest option for an independent Syria and utilized nonsectarian rhetoric to appeal not to other Arabs, but to King-Crane commissioners who could potentially further the cause. Whether religious tolerance was a reality seems to have been irrelevant.

The Shifting World Order

After the King-Crane Commission completed its work and travelled to Paris to see the conclusions of the peace conference, most of its members returned to their prior lives and professions. Charles Crane, however, continued to travel the world, and he returned to Syria in April 1922, almost three years after the conclusion of the commission. He documented some of his concerns about French mandatory rule and worsening opinions about America in a letter to his friend and former colleague, Dr. Henry King, following his trip.[102] Interestingly, Crane does not mention in the letter the consternation his visit seemed to have caused for the occupying French government. Indeed, a May 25 clipping from the Washington Star bears the headline "French Sentence Crane to 20 Years in Prison." The article explains that a French military court in Damascus convicted Crane in absentia for "inciting the recent uprisings in the French mandate" during his recent stay there.[103] For a man associated with the United States government, a long-time ally of France, to face such a long prison sentence should he ever enter French or French-occupied territory, his actions must surely have been severe.

Another document from the archive, however, seems to tell a different story. Possibly written by Crane's secretary, the document reads as a form of testimony by Crane on his actions in Syria, beginning with an argument that "the mere presence of an American sympathizer was sufficient to touch off an explosion without any words or actions on his part." He claims that he was clear in his intentions to visit Syria purely as a tourist, saying that he made no speeches and

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[102] Letter from Charles Crane to Henry Churchill King, 11 May 1922, box 20, RG 2/6/1, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1353/rec/117.

[103] Newspaper clipping about Charles Crane in Syria, 25 May 1922, box 2, folder 7, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1678/rec/99.

only listened to Syrians' complaints as a friend, not in any official capacity. The document is also careful to note that he only spoke of President Wilson twice, "[once] regarding Mr. Wilson's deep religious faith, and the other a humorous anecdote," and that Crane was not the organizer of any public demonstrations on his behalf. In Crane's view, the secret police who kept a constant watch on his movements "approached the farcical." In sum, he felt that his trip, and the extreme reaction that followed, showed the "hatred of the Syrians for the mandatory administration" and the "extreme nervousness and anxiety of the French officials."[104]

Why were French officials in Damascus so nervous about Crane's return to Syria? The French had held control of most of Syria and Lebanon since the end of World War I and removed Faisal's government from Damascus in July 1920.[105] Aside from hints to the press by King and Crane made on their return to Paris, no part of the commission's report was published until late 1922, after Crane returned to Syria, when a portion of it was found among President Wilson's papers by a writer researching his role in the peace conference.[106] At the time of Crane's visit, the recommendations made by the commissioners that would have refuted French claims to Syria would have still been largely unheard outside of the US State Department. Thus, the mandatory government's feelings of insecurity speak to a much broader support for the commission's liberal, anti-imperialist ideology than is generally acknowledged today.

It is true that the King-Crane Commission's findings and recommendations were not put into practice in American foreign policy or the peace negotiations in Paris, and the mandatory system that arose was remarkably different to what the vast majority of Arab petitioners

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104 Document summarizing Charles Crane's visit to Syria, 1922, box 2, folder 9, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1777/rec/157.

105 Philip Shukry Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 92.

106 Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1963), 219, 311.

requested. Additionally, as the other chapters have shown, many in the Arab nationalist movement believed President Wilson and the commissioners to be staunch supporters of their right to sovereignty and independence. However, the commission and its apparent support for self-determination, meaning a choice for independence and a loose, temporary mandate, was not an anomaly within an otherwise uniform atmosphere of imperialism. Instead, this chapter argues that the commission's driving liberal philosophy represents an ideology diverse in its conviction and application at a time when the future of international relations and law was far from certain. As an Evening Post editorial noted on the publication of the commission's report in 1922, "the days of the Paris Peace Conference were magnificent days, when almost anything seemed possible."[107] The following pages will use President Wilson's interpretation of liberalism and self-determination as a basis with which other manifestations of the ideology can be compared to explore how the King-Crane Commission and its members were viewed by their contemporaries.

The common assumption that Wilson and the commissioners represented a doomed minority against a uniform imperialist Europe is an oversimplification of the confusion displayed at the peace conference. In reality, the self-determination of the commissioners was not a utopian, independence-for-all movement, and the policies of Britain and France chose selectively which elements they were willing to indulge and which threatened their imperial control.

Wilsonian Liberalism

President Woodrow Wilson occupied the White House during a time of upheaval both at home and abroad, with World War I, of course, being the defining period of his time in office. His speeches and policies during and after the war, aided by a robust system of American

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[107] Ibid., 314.

propaganda, played a significant role in shaping both America's position as a world power and the redeveloping international political order in the following years.[108] While his stance on direct military intervention in the war changed over the course of his campaign and second term, his plans for post-war peace remain his most well-known policy positions. For him, peace could only come about from a new order built on the principles of "equality among nations" and "consent of the governed." Consent of the governed, which he saw as a quintessential American ideal, would be become the principle of "self-determination" in his speeches from the beginning of 1918.[109] Wilson remains famous to this day as the main proponent of self-determination, and Western liberalism more broadly, of his time, so it is natural to use his interpretation of the ideology as a basis for analyzing how other Western actors adopted it to further their own interests.

Wilson's principle of self-determination was based on a belief that post-war peace among and within states must come from consent of the governed, which Manela suggests "appeared to pose a direct challenge to the imperial arrangements that spanned much of the world at the time." Wilson's own speeches, however, focused exclusively on self-determination for the European states as they were formed at the peace conference. Further, Secretary of State Robert Lansing explicitly claimed that the principle did not apply to those he saw as racially inferior, leading many scholars to doubt the extent to which Wilson truly wished to pursue a policy of universal self-determination. However, Manela argues, citing historian N. Gordon Levin, that Wilson's true vision was for "underdeveloped peoples," such as those under European imperialist control,

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108 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.

109 Ibid., 22-23.

to gain independence and self-determination through an international legal process that would involve "benevolent tutelage" from a mandatory power.[110]

Whatever the exact balance of self-determination and imperialism Wilson subscribed to, his beliefs were clearly influenced by his upbringing and domestic politics, and most notable was his clear racism regarding black Americans. Manela uses one meeting between Wilson and William Monroe Trotter, a black journalist. In the meeting, Wilson defended segregation as a way for black Americans to "develop their skills" and argued that it would end once black people had proven their equality to whites.[111] This perception that whites should be essentially tutors for non-whites in their development paralleled with his view on self-determination within a mandate system. To him, granting independence to those who claimed it around the world was not the main goal of the Paris Peace Conference. Rather, the creation of the League of Nations to keep the peace and manage requests for independence was his priority.[112] The covenant for the League of Nations, found in the Treaty of Versailles suggests that the people of the Ottoman Empire, among other territories, "are not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" and that "tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations... as mandatories on behalf of the League of Nations."[113] It seems that Wilson, one of the leaders who approved these instructions and was most supportive of the League of Nations, believed self-determination should be granted to those of all races, provided they agreed to learn from white Westerners and prove themselves capable of legitimate rule, just as black Americans would have to prove themselves.

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110 Ibid., 24-26.

111 Ibid., 27.

112 Ibid., 60.

113 Charles I. Bevans, *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, Washington: Department of State, 1968, www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf (accessed November 2, 2018), 55-56.

President Wilson's interpretation of self-determination and liberalism was clearly the foundation of the commission's ideology. Henry King and Charles Crane were chosen personally by President Wilson to lead the inquiry, and Crane was an "old friend and supporter of the president."[114] Further, the covenant of the League of Nations and its mandate system mentioned above, that Wilson pressed for so enthusiastically, was quoted directly in the official instructions given to the commissioners for their mission.[115] However, Wilson did not hold a monopoly on the interpretation of Western liberalism. The following pages will address the functional differences among several manifestations of the ideology and their interactions with and influences on the commission's work in the Arab provinces.

American Missionaries on Self-Determination

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) accounted for the first substantial interaction by Americans with Arabs in the Levant, and the influence of American evangelical Protestantism can be clearly seen in the King-Crane Commission. Indeed, the writings of missionaries featured heavily in the literature gathered for the commission's preparations, and one such book was eventually quoted in the their final report.[116] Henry King himself was a devout Christian who believed Wilson's self-determination was an "attempt to apply Christian principles to international relations."[117] According to historian Andrew Patrick, King had spent time before the commission as the Religious Works Division for France for the

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114 Letter from Donald Brodie to Professor Harry N. Howard, 10 November 1940, box 1, folder 6, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1482/rec/3.

115 Instructions for Commissioners, 25 March 1919, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 1, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/236/rec/6.

116 Andrew Patrick, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 79.

117 Ibid., 53.

YMCA, and much of what he knew about the Middle East came from missionary accounts and the Bible.[118]

Among the many photographs found among King's papers in the commission archives are several that focus on Christian holy sites, calling back to the popularity of pilgrimages among contemporary Americans. One such photo depicts a nun praying in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.[119] Unlike many of the other photographs taken by the commissioners of social gatherings and other interactions with locals during their survey of the region, this has a far more personal, and of course overtly faithful, tone. As this section will show, evangelical Protestantism had a continuous presence in not just the lives and perspectives of the commissioners, but American foreign policy. Thus, the missionaries' interpretation of self-determination for the Arabs they lived among had a profound impact on how the ideology was applied an adapted by the other world actors.

One document, a letter from Crane to King in 1922, after the French mandate had been established in Syria, details the complaints he heard from Syrian friends upon his return to the country after the conclusion of the commission and peace conference. According to Crane, the Syrians he spoke with complained that their wishes for independence, with an American mandate or British mandate as second and third preferences, had be ignored, along with their complete rejection of French "domination." Crane observes in the letter that respect for European countries among Syrians had decreased sharply since the commission's visit to the region, and he worries that perceptions of America would soon follow the same path. His proposed solution is to attempt to convince the president and secretary of state to publish the commission's final report

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 1919, box 129, folder 1, RG 2/6, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/15/rec/57.

as a way to regain the trust of Syrians. Specifically, he claims that "in another two or three years all the work of our missionaries – now seriously menaced – and our schools will be lost."[120]

In a 1922 newspaper article quoting Crane's denials of inciting riots in Damascus, he argues that he was re-visiting Syria as a private citizen, and not to "represent the United States Government or American missionary interests in Syria" when speaking with locals.[121] This suggests that, at least in Crane's view, official government policy and missionary work in the region were equally important to Arabs in the region, and therefore equally dangerous in the eyes of the French mandatory government. He goes on to claim that America is particularly concerned with the situation in Syria because $60,000,000 had been invested by missionaries "in schools and in other ways" in the area.[122] While this statement seems to contradict his argument that he his visit had no relation to official US interests, it does reveal that much of America's positions on the region were motivated, at least in some part, by the interests of the Protestant missionaries. This is because, as many of the petitions in favor of an American mandate argue, the United States had no claim or interest in Arab territory. To some extent, the government's sole policy for the region was the protection of its citizens abroad. This is supported by Patrick's claim that in private in 1917, President Wilson's main argument for avoiding war with Turkey was the uncertainty that would be placed on the safety of missionaries and native Christians, as concern for their evangelical efforts.[123]

With missionaries serving as the primary representatives of America prior to, and even after, the King-Crane Commission, it is understandable that Crane would be particularly

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120 Letter from Charles Crane to Henry Churchill King, 11 May 1922.

121 Newspaper clipping about Crane's role in Syrian riots, 1922, box 2, folder 7, 2062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1683/rec/2.

122 Ibid.

123 Patrick, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative,* 23.

concerned with both their wellbeing among a population increasingly frustrated with America's apparent reluctance to support their wishes for independence. The American government, specifically Wilson's administration, had not published the commission's final report in 1919, but unelected missionaries had become the only representatives for this decision to Arabs. This priority for the success and safety of missionary work seen in his letter reveals not just his personal feelings on religion and missionary work, but the simple reality that American Protestant evangelism was, at this time, intertwined with American foreign policy in the region.

With the substantial role they occupied in American foreign policy, missionaries' interpretation of self-determination and liberalism is worth consideration. According to a letter from Crane to Brodie in 1934, the President of the Syrian Protestant College, Dr. Howard Bliss, was critical in supporting the idea of a commission in Syria, and it was through his friendship with President Wilson that the idea was pushed at the Paris Peace Conference.[124] Howard goes further in his book on the commission, claiming that Bliss was the strongest proponent of an international commission, with the participation of the French and British. He spoke in front of the major powers at the conference to argue for the idea, claiming that "Syria was under martial law" and that an unbiased commission to "satisfy the demands of honor" was necessary to accurately determine the desires of the people.[125] Bliss's position, as a friend of Wilson but also as a prominent second generation missionary and president of the Syrian Protest College, gave him the opportunity to influence the American stance on a commission at the peace conference.

Dr. Bliss was not the only missionary who attempted to influence the American government and its representatives on the King-Crane Commission. George E. White,

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[124] Letter from Charles R. Crane to Donald Brodie, 30 November 1934, box 1, folder 6, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1488/rec/2.

[125] Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 24-26.

missionary for the ABCFM and president of Anatolia College, wrote to the commission on August 16, 1919. The archive attributes this letter to George Elon White, a former congressman and businessman at the time of the commission. Because there is no evidence of time spent in Turkey, I believe attributing the document to George Edward White, the missionary, is more appropriate. As a witness to the Armenian genocide, White writes against allowing Turkey to form an independent state and urges the commission to recommend independence for Armenia under an American mandate. He claims that former Ottoman officials and their institutions, including Ataturk, are too violent and prejudiced against Christians, but that the people of Anatolia all want an American mandate.[126] To him, at least, self-determination seems to take a more didactic approach. While he supports political independence for Armenians, he does not appear to be interested in the commission's work to find out the population's true feelings; instead, he is confident in his ability to determine their universal support for the United States.

Going even further in the paternalistic assumptions of Arab and Turkish needs and wishes, Caleb Gates, then the president of Robert College in Istanbul, traveled to Paris to argue in front of the peace conference against the creation of a commission at all. He spoke for a single American mandate that would include all of Anatolia, Armenia, and the Arab provinces with arguments strong enough that Lybyer believed he "had all but ended the commission's hope of going."[127] This missionary's ideology cannot be comfortably labeled as a liberal one, or anything representative of Wilson's principle of self-determination, as it removes all consideration for the people's political voice and essentially calls for an American imperial influence rather than a

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126 Letter from George E. White to the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey at the American Embassy in Constantinople, 16 August 1919, box 128, folder 3, RG 2/6, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/478/rec/125.

127 Patrick, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative,* 66, 85.

French or British one. However, the extreme nature of Gates's view highlights its ideological proximity to those of the other missionaries, like White, and even Bliss. While most of the missionaries may have supported Wilson and the commissioners in theory and claimed support for Arab independence from Ottoman Turkish control, these beliefs seem to rest on the assumption that Arab desires for independence and government would match what the missionaries had laid out for them.

This form of pseudo-self-determination found in missionaries who approached the commission can be traced back to their views on the relationship between race and religion. Early ABCFM missionaries largely believed natives in the region to be racially inferior, much like their perceptions of earlier evangelical targets, the Native Americans, and saw them as "'untutored', primitive, and barbarous."[128] This, paired with their views of Islam's "despotism" and moral degradation, led missionaries to believe it was their duty to save Arabs and Turks using a form of "benevolent paternalism."[129] This rhetoric supporting a teacher-student relationship between American missionaries and natives was pervasive throughout the long nineteenth century. Thomas Kidd writes of one prominent missionary, James Merrick, who declared "even among the blinded adherents of Islam a door of hope seems opening with the prospect of better things for future days," suggesting that natives would welcome the instruction missionaries were offering for their own freedom.[130] Some missionaries were less certain of the racial inferiority of Turks, however, and believed they were a "noble race" who had been corrupted by Islam.[131]

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128 Ussama Makdisi, 2008, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 64.
129 Ibid., 64, 66.
130 Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 43.
131 Ibid., 44.

With these racist or otherwise paternalistic views of Arabs and Turks as a foundation for Protestant missions to the region, rooted in a hatred of Islam, it is no surprise that the later generations of the twentieth century held the positions seen above. An American mandate, supported to varying degrees by most of them, would be most likely to promote a form of democracy and morality founded on American Protestant values in the region, therefore hastening the decline of Islam's political influence. Some, like Bliss and White, supported the commission with the assumption that their Arab and Turkish "pupils" would naturally choose what the missionaries believed was best, while Gates found little need to ask their opinion at all. The ideology espoused by these individuals may have overlapped with Western liberal principles in its desired outcome, but it would be a mischaracterization of the missionaries' goals to label them broad supporters of self-determination. Still, it is important to remember that the missionaries' unitary role in American foreign policy in the Middle East leading into the peace negotiations would have made their input particularly present in the commissioners' minds and driving motivations, along with Wilsonian self-determination as a whole.

British Actors on Self-Determination

When Prime Minister David Lloyd George came to power in 1916, he established a small war cabinet of just four men, two of whom, Curzon and Milner, were "imperialists of the traditional kind" and "relics from the froward old empire-building." With them, the imperialists brought other men to the new government, including Sir Mark Sykes of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, whose main goal was to "to integrate the empire and to place its future security beyond doubt."[132] And yet, Manela claims that Lloyd George was largely responsible for

[132] John Gallagher, "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922," *Modern Asian Studies* 15, No. 3 (1981), 355-356.

establishing the term "self-determination," separating it from its Bolshevik origins and tying it to Wilson's support for consent of the governed, in a speech at Caxton Hall in January 1918.[133] This section will consider the ideological diversity of Lloyd George's government at the end of the war, and how a few key figures, including Lloyd George himself, held positions that overlapped and interacted with Wilson's self-determination, resulting in initial, if not sustained, support for the commission.

On January 5, 1918, in Caxton Hall, Prime Minister Lloyd George gave a speech to the British Labor Conference in which he laid out specific reasons for war with Germany and his plans for peace negotiations.[134] As stated above, Lloyd George preceded President Wilson in this speech by using the term "self-determination." Specifically in reference to the colonial territories of the Central Powers, especially those of Germany, he declares that "the general principle of national self-determination is therefore as applicable in their cases as in those of occupied European territories."[135] Lloyd George focuses more German colonies in Africa than other colonial, non-European territories and hints at a mandate system in saying "the inhabitants should be placed under the control of an Administration, acceptable to themselves, one of whose main purposes will be to prevent their exploitation for the benefit of European capitalists or governments."[136]

At least for the African territories, Lloyd George's interpretation of self-determination contains a paternalism similar to that of the American missionaries, as he does not seem to consider the possibility of complete independence for the native populations. Whether we can

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133 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment,* 39.
134 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 5.
135 G. Lowes Dickinson, *Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims (December 1916-November 1918)* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1919), 114.
136 Ibid.

draw the same conclusion for his opinion on Arab independence or self-determination from his statements on African colonies is less clear. The covenant for the League of Nations differentiates between populations formerly under Turkish control and those of Central Africa. Former Ottomans were believed to be at a "stage of development" suitable for self-rule under the guidance of a mandatory power, but those of Central Africa, were to have mandates that "must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals."[137] It is possible Lloyd George would have similarly distinguished Ottoman populations from their African counterparts in requesting independence, rather than merely a choice between mandatory powers, but the speech focused on German territories as the main belligerent. He does mention the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire once, arguing that "Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine are, in our judgment, entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions," but he declares that further elaboration on these "national conditions" would be inappropriate in this speech.[138]

The motivation behind this speech lies in pressures from the United States government, on whom the British relied for necessary war supplies, and the British public to adopt more "progressive, enlightened war aims" as the movement towards a new world order grew.[139] In their book, The Internationalists, Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro write about the end of the Old World Order, defined as the set of norms among European states dating to the seventeenth century, in which "war [was] a legitimate means of righting wrongs." In its place, the New World Order developed around the time of World War II, following the signing of the Paris Peace Pact

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137 Bevans, *Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)*, 56.

138 G. Lowes Dickinson, *Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims (December 1916-November 1918),* 113.

139 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment,* 38.

by the major European powers and the United States to outlaw war. In the New World Order, "states no longer have the right to conquer other states; waging an aggressive war is a grave crime... economic sanctions are not only legal, but the standard way in which international law is enforced."[140]

The Paris Peace Conference, according to Hathaway and Shapiro, was a reflection of the Old World Order in the victors' harsh demands for reparations. However, the creation of the League of Nations, to which disputes would be submitted for arbitration, was a step toward the realization of the New World Order and the peace pact that would be signed only ten years later.[141] The justifications for war, which Lloyd George claimed in his speech to be "self-defense" and the "violated public law of Europe," and not the "break-up of the German peoples or the disintegration of their state," do not fit perfectly in line with the developing New World Order.[142] However, the concern with clarification and assurances of self-determination, if unevenly applied, reflect the period of in-between and transition, bookended by World War I and II. The imperial European powers still held territories across Asia and Africa, but increasingly vocal debates over war and annexation would soon call these practices into question.

Despite this, Lloyd George's refusal to elaborate on the rights of Syrians and other Arabs in terms of self-determination in his speech is telling, given his willingness to do so with other European and colonized populations. Put simply, the British government had economic and political interests in the Levant that they were unwilling to threaten. Lloyd George's reticence is due to the series of secret treaties that were signed during the war to decide the fate of the Arab

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140 Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), xv, xvii.

141 Ibid., 105, 128.

142 G. Lowes Dickinson, *Documents and Statements Relating to Peace Proposals and War Aims (December 1916-November 1918),* 109.

provinces in a manner that would maintain the degree of influence enjoyed by the Great Powers in the Ottoman Empire. One such treaty, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, was signed by Britain and France in 1916. The agreement decided that, following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Britain would take control or "indirect influence" over areas in present-day Iraq, Jordan, and parts of Palestine, while France would have similar zones of direct and indirect control in southeast Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. Some of the territory divided between Britain and France had previously been promised to Sharif Hussein as an independent Arab state.[143] This contradiction in policy, as well as anger among Arabs over the secrecy with which their fate had been decided by Europeans, made the question of Ottoman territory particularly contentious during the peace negotiations.[144] The principle of self-determination, and the broader movement to eliminate war and annexation, would complicate European claims to the region.

However, various British actors, including Lloyd George, supported the idea of the King-Crane Commission, at least temporarily. According to Howard, Lloyd George "had no objection to an investigation in Palestine and Mesopotamia," despite British claims to the regions in the wartime treaties, and official instructions for an inter-allied commission were agreed upon by Lloyd George, Wilson, and Clemenceau. Sir Henry McMahon and David Hogarth were chosen as British representatives for the commission.[145] On the other hand, some British officials were clearly against the commission. T. E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell, and Sir Valentine Chirol, meeting with French officials who also opposed an investigation of Arab opinion, believed that a

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143 William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 150.

144 This anger was well-documented by the King-Crane Commission. Many of the petitions they received contained a rejection of the "secret treaties" (*al-itfāqāt as-sirrī*) formed by European powers during the war. For an example, see Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919, Donald Brodie papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1646/rec/184.

145 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 33, 44, 50.

commission "might upset and unsettle the people." Further, it seems Lloyd George began to withdraw his support for the commission, possibly due to the pro-independence "unrest" beginning in British-controlled Egypt.[146] Ultimately, the commission became a singularly American expedition, but there remained British supporters, like General Allenby.

General Allenby had led the British campaign into Palestine during WWI, and, at the time of the commission, was serving as Special High Commissioner in Egypt\. Crane, in a letter to Harry Howard that hoped to clarify facts of the commission for Howard's book, claimed that Allenby was particularly instrumental in encouraging British support for the commission. While the British would not send their own delegation, Crane felt that the "sharp telegram" send by Allenby urging the commission to be sent immediately helped to bring the debate in Paris to an end.[147] He even offered the use of his private yacht, the Maid of Honor, to the commissioners for their trip.[148]

General Allenby continued to support the commission's work after their journey back to Paris. Following the commissioners' return and the conclusion of peace negotiations, Crane credited Allenby, in a letter to King, with delaying the withdrawal of British troops from Syria, which were to be replaced with French soldiers and the new mandatory government. He claimed that "General Allenby and all of his aids...were all unqualifiedly for the report," and the letter seems to hint that it was the commission's warnings of anti-French sentiment among Arabs that pushed Allenby to act.[149]

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146 Ibid., 25, 43.

147 Letter from Charles R. Crane to Donald Brodie, 30 November 1934, box 1, folder 6, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1488/rec/8.

148 Howard, 135.

149 Letter from Charles Crane to Henry Churchill King, 3 December 1919, RG 2/6/1, box 20, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/kingcrane/id/1354/rec/7.

One explanation for this confusion in support for the commission among the British is a desire to secure an argument for renegotiating the division of territory that had been previously agreed upon with Emir Faisal and France. For example, T. E. Lawrence wrote a letter to the editor in an unidentified newspaper in September 1919 to defend the legitimacy of the different treaties created during the war while hinting at support for some form of self-determination. He suggests that, while he "can see no inconsistencies or incompatibilities" in the treaties, despite the fact that parts of Syria had been promised both to the Arabs and French, the Sykes-Picot Agreement in particular "no longer suits the British and French governments." He goes on to argue that while the treaties must necessarily be amended, this "can hardly be done satisfactorily by England and France without giving weight and expression also to the opinion of the third interest – the Arabs – which it created."[150]

Lawrence does not mention the commission specifically, which he did not fully support and whose report never reached the peace conference or post-conference negotiations among Emir Faisal, Lloyd George, and French Prime Minister Clemenceau. However, the principle of self-determination, while certainly warped, can be recognized in his argument that the Sykes-Picot Agreement must be renegotiated to better accommodate the Arab state promised to Emir Faisal, even though it was still to fall under mandatory purview. Further, Lawrence's comment reveals that he believed the "interest" of Arabs was "created" by the British and French treaty, clearly reflecting a racist misunderstanding of the Arab nationalist movement and its history. In

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[150] Newspaper clipping of a letter to the editor from T. E. Lawrence, 11 September 1919, box 2, folder 7, 82062-15.51, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1706/rec/146; Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria* (Beirut: Khayat's, 1960), 14.

sum, Lawrence's view is an example of self-determination being adopted in part and manipulated to serve the interests of the British government.

The Arabs, on the other hand, were briefly hopeful that the British, and the French to an extent, would support their right to self-determination. An Anglo-French Declaration had been published in November 1918 indicating support for the "establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations" in Syria and Mesopotamia.[151] Faisal himself viewed the declaration as a strong indication for his government's future success until he learned of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in detail while visiting France and Britain before the Paris Peace Conference. From that point, Faisal seems to have aligned himself with the Americans, and President Wilson's support for democratic ideals more specifically, and Zionist leaders such as Chaim Weizmann, as he felt the British and French position was a threat to both Jewish and Arab interests.[152] Speaking at the peace conference in early February 1919, Faisal demanded complete independence for a unified Syria from the European powers. Upon a hint about the mandate system from President Wilson, Faisal demanded, in addition to independence, the "right [of Syrians] to choose their own mandatory."[153] Regardless of Lawrence's belief that it was a British creation, Arab nationalism, as discussed in the previous chapters, was not going away. Faisal continued to petition the Paris Peace Conference for independence, or at the very least a democratically selected mandate as supported by Wilson. It is possible that the easiest solution for the British government in dealing with both American and Arab pressures was to go along with the idea of the commission as a consultation of the Arab people without making any firm promises of independence.

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151 Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence,* 47.
152 Ibid., 49, 62.
153 Ibid., 68.

Despite Lloyd George's remarks to the British Labor Conference, none of the British participants in peace negotiations discussed above could be truthfully considered unqualified supporters of self-determination for the Arab provinces. The support that was given to the commission or other theoretical input by Arabs was rooted in racism and paternalism, reserved to a selection of mandatory power with no consideration for full independence. Even this willingness to step toward the idea of self-determination was checked by British concerns over their rivalry with France and unrest in Egypt and anxiety about the creation and protection of minority groups. However, the influence of Wilsonian ideology and the broader anti-war movement towards a peace pact is apparent in the lack of a clear policy against the commission. The idea of a commission was first discussed among the American delegation at Paris in early February 1919, and the months between the project's conception and actual departure in the end of May were, in truth, chaos.[154] The part the British played in supporting a theoretical commission, questioning its geographic restrictions, approving their own representatives, and dragging their feet in final negotiations before dropping out of the project entirely reflects a series of contradictions and ideologies in conflict. Therefore, while it would be untrue to claim that the principle of self-determination had resolute supporters within the British administration, it is clear that their imperialist interests were being influenced by the liberal movement beginning to gather strength in America and Europe.

French Actors on Self-Determination

British response to Wilson's principle of self-determination and the King-Crane Commission extended to theoretical and rhetorical support to satisfy liberals in America and the

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154 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 24.

British electorate, but it did not amount to a meaningful reversal in policy towards the Middle East mandates. This section returns to the question of French anxiety towards the commission and its aftermath in an attempt to explain why French officials would perceive the liberal movement in America and Britain as a threat to its imperial holdings, rather than the ill-fated minority it is commonly assumed to have been. The basis for the French position, that the territory including Syria, Lebanon, and parts of southern Anatolia should be given to French control as per the Sykes-Picot Agreement, rested on its history of cultural and economic influence in the region. Robert de Caix, a French foreign minister, published an article in The New Europe during the peace negotiations to outline this territorial claim, in which he argued that "all the lands of the Ottoman Empire had been won for French culture" and referred to a "heritage of moral influence" going back to "St. Louis's crusaders or the soldiers of Bonaparte." Further, he made economic arguments for maintaining French control over the post-Ottoman territory, claiming that, before the war, "60.31 per cent of the Ottoman public debt and 50.58 per cent of the capital of private societies which had undertakings in the Ottoman Empire, was claimed by French investors."[155]

Simply put, de Caix believed that the Sykes-Picot was less than ideal for the French government, merely a settlement to preserve a positive relationship with the other European powers despite claims to all Ottoman territory. His article and its follow-up in The New Europe complained that the British wished to abandon promises made to the French in the Sykes-Picot Agreement to provide territory for an independent Arab state, including the important cities of Damascus, Aleppo, and Mosul. Essentially, he charged that the British government was seizing

[155] Article entitled "The Question of Syria" by Robert de Caix in The New Europe, 28 August 1919, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 9, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/793/rec/25.

on the principle of self-determination as a way to force their French adversaries out of the region, arguing that "the righteousness of the Wilsonian principles is as binding on one as on the other... but out British friends do not appear to be thinking of renouncing their portion."[156]

With these justifications for French control over a region they believed to be morally and economically inferior, it is no surprise that their enthusiasm for the commission was lackluster at best. Howard sums up the French response well by suggesting that Prime Minister Clemenceau "no doubt with his tongue in his cheek, agreed in principle to an inquiry" and that he stated that "Orientals were very timid and afraid to say what was at the back of their minds," making an accurate survey difficult. Despite giving nominal support for the commission at the peace conference, going as far as to unofficially suggest Jean Gout and Senator Augagnard or de Caix and Maurice Long as possible French representatives on the commission, the French delegation continued to delay proceedings. Eventually, the prime minister declared his refusal to support the commission in practice until the British removed troops from lands designated for French control in the wartime treaties. The British, unwilling to agree to a withdrawal not wishing to send their own representatives without French participation, finally secured the commission's fate as a purely American mission.[157]

The reasons for French reluctance to support the commission becomes apparent upon just a cursory glance at the results of the survey. While the lack of a scientific and uniform set of questions certainly made tallying the results difficult, it is nevertheless impossible to view France as a popular choice for a mandate if the principle of self-determination had been applied to the region. According to the commission's report, 14.68% of the petitions they received declared

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156 Ibid., Article (part 2) by Robert de Caix in The New Europe concerning the Syrian question, 4 September 1919, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 9, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/801/rec/24.

157 Howard, *The King-Crane Commission,* 33, 83, 85.

France as the preferred choice for a mandatory power (in some form), most of which were concentrated in Lebanon. Compared to the 60.5% of petitions requesting an American mandate, and the 55.3% that supported Britain as a "second choice," an endorsement of the commission and the broader application of self-determination would have guaranteed territorial losses for France. Further, those who opposed French rule were vocal in their complaints; 60.5% of the petitions contained "general anti-French sentiments," and eleven specifically referenced French military interference in the commission's work.[158]

This anti-French sentiment would surely have been expected, at least in part, by French officials at the peace conference. Therefore, the benefits of consulting the Arab population for the British, if merely that it would temporarily appease Arab nationalists, were outweighed by the threat such an endeavor would pose to their claim to Syrian territory. Further, according to historian Zeine N. Zeine, Clemenceau "considered Faisal thoroughly pro-British, doing whatever his British masters instructed him to do." After Bliss's presentation in support of a commission to the peace conference, the prime minister invited a "Syrian Commission" headed by Shukri Ghanim to contradict his argument. Ghanim spoke emphatically against Faisal and his government, arguing that someone from the Hejaz could not adequately understand or rule Syria. He also argued against consulting the Arab people, instead suggesting that "the Powers, in their wisdom, should appoint that one among them which appears specially qualified to carry out the noble mission of helping a small country lift itself up and of accustoming the eyes of its inhabitants to the light of liberty." His recommendation for this appointment was, unsurprisingly,

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158 Report of the King-Crane Commission, published in the *Editor & Publisher*, 2 December 1922, RG 2/6, box 128, folder 10A, Henry Churchill King Papers, 1873-1934, Oberlin College Archives (Oberlin, Ohio, USA), http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1239/rec/15, 5; an example of specific references to French intervention can be found in Petition from Christian and Muslim residents of Tripoli, 1919. The petitioners complain of "their threats with bayonets of the French troops" (*hadīdhum bi-ḥirāb al-ʿasākir al-afransīa*) to prevent their meeting with commissioners.

France.[159] The question of consultation at the peace conference had brought Faisal, and the Arab nationalist cause more generally, into the middle of an Anglo-French rivalry, and the French would not support in practice any mission that was sure to favor Britain and America.

Consulting Arabs, with the possibility of establishing a representative Syrian nation-state from the results, would have been dangerous to French claims on another front. A major part of the French rhetorical position during the mandate period argued "French presence, and the administrative divisions France had imposed in the mandate territories, as the only thing standing between Syrian Christians and massacre."[160] Historian Benjamin Thomas White argues that when the French mandate was established in Syria, they emphasized and relied on Ottoman religious divisions of the millet system to "divide and conquer," using religious minorities, Christians in particular, to outweigh the Muslim anti-French majority. He suggests that many Christian leaders in the region were willing to continue the old millet system because of the social and economic benefits their status awarded them under French rule. However, there were a significant number of Arab Christian nationalists who opposed the mandate system.[161] Their involvement in petitioning the commission is discussed in Chapter 2 and shown in the results above, and the French would have anticipated this threat to their claim to moral and religious tutelage.

Albert Lybyer went even further in his evaluation of the French position in a handwritten document from July 1919. In it, he shows his surprise that a region he saw as insignificant, "containing not much more than the millions of inhabitants," should be the subject of such contention between France and Britain. He claimed that any promises made to President Wilson

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159 Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence,* 71-72.

160 Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 43.

161 Ibid., 45, 58-60.

and "other supporters of a League of Nations" about the mandates were a "camouflage" for a "partition plan of the old variety." The mandates, as France saw them, "were to have no genuine time limit, but rather to look to permanent control, hardly distinguishable from ownership."[162] It seems, at least to Lybyer, that the French were reticent of directly contradicting the growing anti-war, pro-democratic self-determination trends found among their American and British allies. At the same time, however, they were determined to maintain their Old World Order imperial control, leaving them in a difficult position of declaring support for a theoretical commission while hindering its progress.

Additionally, the move towards the New World Order, while still in its infancy at the time of the Paris Peace Conference, was not a phenomenon found exclusively outside of France. Less than ten years after the end of World War I, Prime Minister Aristide Briand was swayed by suggestions that America held a low opinion of France's "[hostility] to disarmament." Hoping to gain American cooperation in maintaining European peace, he began a policy in line with the movement towards outlawing war. Eventually, negotiations with American foreign policy leaders led to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, commonly known as the Paris Peace Pact designed to eliminate war as a legitimate method of addressing grievances.[163] British officials and their responses to the King-Crane Commission in 1919 may show a more obvious effort to bend to, or at least placate, the growing liberal movement and the democratic, pro-self-determination principles that went with it, but it seems the French also felt the pressure of a New World Order. French reluctance to reject the commission outright, despite their clear discomfort in its

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[162] Draft document concerning Anglo-French relations, 1 July 1919, 15/13/22, Box 16: King-Crane Commission (May-August 1919), Folder 3, Albert H. Lybyer Papers, 1876-1949, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/2406/rec/155.

[163] Hathaway and Shapiro, *The Internationalists,* 120-128.

implications, and the relative rapidity with which they joined the outlawry movement after the war, illustrates the potential strength the movement held in such a time of uncertainty.

It is clear, then, why the French military government was so shaken by Crane's return to Syria in 1922. The original commission in 1919 had shown the influence of Western liberalism and its popularity in the territory over which they claimed moral ownership, and Crane's return likewise reaffirmed growing discontent with the Old World Order in the region. A letter written to Crane from an unknown source in Syria after his visit claims that "the masse which expressed to you their desire and national projects in the days of Emir Faisal still adhere intimately to them" and that there would always be Syrians willing to "[express] to you our hearty disappointment in this sort of mandate which is nothing more [than] slavery." The author, still idealistic about American support for the Wilsonian principles of self-determination and democracy, hoped that Crane's visit would reveal the horrors of a mandate which "is the means of threatening the people by cannons, tanks, and armies."[164] The events Crane witnessed, and the reminder of the anti-imperialist nationalism he previously recorded, further threatened the Old World Order that France was slowly losing.

The visit even brought the realities of mandatory Syria to the attention of self-proclaimed "friends of France." In a 1922 document, these unnamed "friends" declare that Syria is being watched "by all friends of liberal and democratic ideals, for it is in these mandate areas that a great experiment in democracy, championed by Mr. Wilson, and opposed by foreign office policy, is being essayed." In the authors' view, the French foreign office was potentially acting directly in opposition to democratic ideals. They went on to suggest that the mandate system had

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[164] Letter from an unknown sender to Charles R. Crane, 5 May 1922, 82062-15.51, box 1, folder 3, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1455/rec/25.

been intended as a way of avoiding the "tactics of spoliation they had fought against.[165]" The so-called "friends of France" were certainly sympathetic to the mandate government and the struggles they faced, including a lengthy, if factually questionable, explanation of harsh religious divides and economic woes among the Syrian population. However, it is clear that a small but vocal movement supported (at least in part) by President Wilson and other American and British actors had only increased since the time of the King-Crane Commission. Crane's return to Syria and the responses he received showed that soon, the French government, and Europe more generally, would have to reconcile its shift to a New World Order with its imperial claims.

Conclusion

The peace negotiations at the end of World War I and the years that followed were a time of transition for the Western powers, from a history of conquest and annexation to an idealized future where diplomacy solved grievances and war was outlawed. President Woodrow Wilson and the members of the King-Crane Commission are often framed as the champions of this liberal movement against an unwaveringly imperialist Europe. This chapter seeks to complicate this narrative on two fronts, first by illustrating the racial and religious atmosphere in which the American approach to self-determination developed and then by discussing the contradictions in British and French responses to the theoretical movement and the commission in reality. American Protestant evangelism was the primary interest of the United States government in the Middle East at this time. Therefore, the missionaries' knowledge and prejudices played a

[165] Document concerning the French mandate in Syria, 1922, 82062-15.51, box 2, folder 9, Donald M. Brodie Miscellaneous Papers, 1919-1941, Donald Brodie Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/kingcrane/id/1794/rec/135.

significant role in the commission's support for self-determination and American mandatory guidance in the region, on top of the growing anti-war liberal movement.

Further, the British and French, despite their interests in maintaining imperial control over the region as agreed in wartime treaties, did not outright condemn or block the King-Crane Commission. The reluctant support and logistical foot-dragging that ensued reflected a desire to maintain strong relations with America and a pro-democracy liberal image while minimizing the movement's impact on their territorial holdings. Britain appears to have taken a more proactive approach in strategically supporting the commission compared to France, likely due to the clear distrust of French influence that already existed among Arabs surveyed by the commission. Consequently, Crane was not exaggerating when he credited Henry Bliss with the idea and execution of the commission. One American missionary was able to sway the President, whose influence over the European powers, mixed with their unwillingness to publicly reject liberalism and democratic ideals, resulted in a commission that was favored by few but nevertheless approved for departure. The Paris Peace Conference and the establishment of the League of Nations serves as an early glimpse at the anti-war democratic movement that would continue to grow during the interwar period despite the anxieties of imperial powers. The uncertainty and contradictory reactions during the Ottoman portion of the negotiations reflect the moral and diplomatic cherry-picking that was necessary to navigate the changing international order while maximizing the political outcome.

Conclusion: The Case for Studying the King-Crane Commission

This project follows several lines of inquiry to explore the gaps in literature on the King-Crane Commission. Beginning with an outline of the goals and methodology of the commission along with a description of the state of Arab nationalism immediately after World War I, Chapter 1 shows how the commission documented nationalist rhetoric and its legitimacy, derived from the emerging middle class and journalism industry. To complicate the nationalist narrative recorded by the commissioners, the second chapter takes a narrower look at a subsection of the commissioners. Focusing specifically on the petitions from religious groups, I found that the top-down nonsectarian rhetoric found little popularity among the general masses (contrary to Haddad's theory on desectarianization) while religious leaders actively constructed their rhetoric to appeal directly to the American commissioners. On the other hand, Chapter 3 attempts to explain the commission's approval at the Paris Peace Conference despite widespread anxiety about its potential effects on imperial policy. By exploring the varying policy positions and concerns of each actor, I show that allowing the commission to go ahead, while refusing to participate personally, was the best option for Britain and France to manage the expectations of both Arab nationalists and anti-war, pro-democracy liberals without ceding any significant claims to imperial territory.

The King-Crane Commission represents a collision between two related periods of uncertainty. In the post-Ottoman Arab provinces, Arab nationalists were attempting to come up with a unified and credible voice for independence that would grant them both vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Their efforts to be recognized as a delegation at the Paris Peace

Conference, led by Emir Faisal, brought this struggle for order to the West, where the European powers were undergoing their own shift in power structure. America had gained increased leverage over their European allies during the war, and a growing liberal movement was beginning to challenge the use of war and annexation as a method of resolving international conflict. The collision of these moments at the peace conference and the holdover of imperialist ideology resulted in a project of consultation, whereby Arabs could voice their demands in a manner chosen to support democratic ideals despite wartime treaties promising their land to imperial control.

In normative terms, the commission cannot be considered a success. Despite collecting over 90,000 signatures, a majority in support of unified Syrian independence with a limited American mandate, the commission's report was kept silent until 1922, when it was published for the benefit of interested academics. By the end of the peace negotiations, the British and French mandate system had been firmly established, contradicting the wishes that Arabs expressed in their petitions. Still, this thesis hopes to show that the King-Crane Commission is worthy of greater attention than it is generally awarded. At its most basic, the commission archives provide an opportunity to return agency to Arabs in a time period where they are primarily described as the passive victims of a looming and inevitable imperial project. On the contrary, the diversity of material in the archive shows the many different viewpoints expressed by Arabs at this time and their strategies to sway, even manipulate, Westerners to support their cause. The imperialist ideology was certainly strong in Europe and even America, where Orientalist notions of race and religion were thriving among Protestant Evangelists, but it was absolutely not an inevitability at the start of peace negotiations. Arab nationalists and European and American liberals posed a

serious challenge to British and French territorial agreements, and the King-Crane Commission represents a struggle for dominance in the shifting world order.

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